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ABSTRACT

A total of 3,732 recipients of Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowances during 1979 and 1980 received questionnaires and parents of 313 families were interviewed to determine who benefitted from the AIC Scheme, what use was made of the AIC allowance, what effect did the AIC Scheme appear to have had, and what anomalies existed in relation to participants and benefits under the scheme. "Rural dwellers" were families in Western Australia and Queensland while metropolitan Perth/Sydney respondants represented families with "handicapped" children. Queensland AIC recipients were younger, more mobile, and more isolated than their Western Australian counterparts. Such variations emphasize the difficulties of mounting a national scheme which has uniform benefits and yet achieves its basic equalisation of opportunity intentions. Costs are high for those children who must live away from home for educational purposes, and the AIC Scheme has deteriorated in its capacity to assist with meeting those costs. Ultimately a separate scheme of assistance should be created for children with disabilities, but in the interim the existing categories should be provided for in the AIC Scheme at the revised levels of benefits recommended for the geographically isolated. Seventeen other recommendations and five appendixes conclude the document. (BRR)

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Commonwealth Department of Education

Review of the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme

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Commonwealth Department of Education

REVIEW OF THE ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN SCHEME

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University of Western Australia

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Mr K N Jones
Secretary
Commonwealth Department
of Education

Dear Mr Jones

In January 1980 your Department commissioned Professor P D Tannock of the University of Western Australia to undertake a review of the Commonwealth's Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme. It was estimated that the review would take eighteen months to complete. In January 1981, following Professor Tannock's departure from the University to become Chairman of the Commonwealth Schools Commission, principal responsibility for completing the review and preparing the report was transferred to me. Oversight of the project has continued to be in the hands of a reference group chaired by Dr Tannock and comprising the following:

Mr M Angus, State Education Department of Western Australia (Research Branch)

Mr M Beech, Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia

Mr P Dunnell, State Education Department of Western Australia (Research Branch)

Mrs V Kopke, Secretary, ICPA, Western Australia (Carnarvon, WA)

Mr P M Moyes, Headmaster, Christchurch Grammar School, Perth

Mr C de Silva, Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia

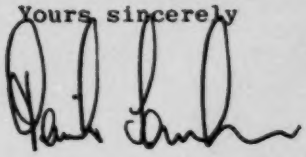
Mr R Treweeke, Federal President, ICPA (Walgett, NSW)

This committee has been a major source of advice and assistance in carrying out the research tasks and compiling the report. So too have the main research assistants associated with the project, Mrs J Bull, Mrs Rosalie Thackrah and Mrs Tessa Burrows.

The report reviews the background to the AIC Scheme, sets out in summary form information derived from the survey by questionnaire and interview of many isolated families, and presents a series of recommendations for what seem to us necessary and urgent changes to the scheme.

If you wish, Dr Tannock and I shall be happy to discuss the report and its recommendations with your officers when convenient.

Yours sincerely



D G Tomlinson
26 October, 1981

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CHAPTER 1 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN: BACKGROUND AND BENEFITS

1.1 The Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme (AIC) was introduced by the Commonwealth Government in January 1973. Its purpose was to provide financial assistance for the schooling of children who, because of the geographic isolation of their homes, did not have reasonable daily access to government schools offering courses at appropriate levels. The decision to introduce the scheme came about as a result of several interacting factors. These included the campaign waged by the recently-formed Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA), the rural economic crisis of the late 1960's, the growing preparedness of the Commonwealth to undertake educational responsibilities, and the emergence of education as a significant political issue in the context of the 1972 Federal election.

THE ORIGINS OF THE SCHEME

1.2 The rural economic crisis in 1970 led to the establishment of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) to agitate for special consideration of the education of children in remote districts. The combined effects of recurring drought, a downturn in return for beef and wool, and the accelerated drift of population away from depressed rural districts, threatened the viability of schools, and in particular, boarding schools and hostels servicing those regions. One such district was Bourke (NSW). The threatened closure of the Bourke Hostel motivated the Bourke Branch of the Graziers' Association to call a public meeting on 9 February 1971 to discuss educational problems in that and surrounding districts. A subsequent meeting on 16 April formed the inaugural branch of ICPA. By the end of November there were 39 branches in four States (Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia). The first Federal ICPA Conference was held at Bourke on 15 April 1972.

1.3 The ICPA adopted as policy the following aims;

- An allowance, free of means test, of $15 per school week for each isolated child forced to live away from home to attend school. This allowance was to be paid directly to the school, hostel, or place of board.
- An annual allowance of $400 per family towards the cost of employing a supervisor for children studying by correspondence at home.
- An annual allowance of $400 for parents who maintained a second home to give children access to school.
- A Commonwealth taxation allowance of $800 per child for isolated children.

Finance for the establishment of Government hostels or boarding schools in remote areas, and subsidies on a basis of $1 for $2 of the running costs of hostels.

1.4 An isolated child was defined by ICPA as one who "for geographic reasons has not reasonable daily access to an appropriate school." The ICPA suggested that these included children removed by distance from any school facilities; children attending primary schools in small towns where no secondary school was available and distance to the nearest secondary school was beyond bus range; those children attending central high schools where no full high school was within daily reach by bus; those children travelling excessive distances over unformed or unsealed roads where such travelling imposes hardships on parents and children; the child from isolated areas who needs remedial education at special schools and must find accommodation to be able to attend such schools.

1.5 The ICPA policy had widespread support from the rural community and from influential country-based organisations. As a result, the problem of educational provision for isolated children became a prominent political issue in the Federal election year of 1972. Both major parties offered positive policy initiatives.

1.6 On 23 May 1972 the ALP spokesman on education, Mr K.E. Beazley, announced that a Federal Labor government would provide annual allowances of $600 for the education of isolated children. In his Policy Speech delivered in November, 1972, the Liberal Prime Minister, Sir William McMahon, promised to "give an education allowance of $400 a year free of means test for children in isolated areas who must live away from home in order to attend school or who have to be taught at home".

1.7 In the meantime, the States had also made increased provision for isolated children. All States except Victoria offered boarding allowances, but they differed in detail with respect to distance criteria, means tests, beneficiaries, and value. Almost all State schemes were limited to secondary school students, and benefits were paid regardless of attendance at a government or non-government school. Allowances were generally subject to a means test. Four States, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, made special provision for students whose homes were in remote areas. In addition, New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania, provided junior-secondary and senior-secondary bursaries or scholarships, awarded on a basis of merit, to children in country areas for whom appropriate schools were not available.

1.8 In May 1972, Commonwealth State Ministers of education discussed the needs of isolated children at a meeting of the Australian Education Council. They resolved that the transportation of students and the payment of conveyance allowance should remain as State responsibilities. However, they suggested that a

meeting of Commonwealth and State officials should be convened to discuss the problems of isolated children. It was agreed that the discussion should concentrate on measures which might form the basis of a program of Commonwealth financial assistance to such students.

1.9 That meeting was held in Canberra on 8-9 June 1972 and was attended by representatives of all States, the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth Department of Education and Science. The recommendations which emerged formed the basis of the AIC Scheme announced in January 1973. Among the more important conclusions were the following:

- That there was a need to support, by the payment of an allowance, children who were obliged to live away from home to attend school and that the level of the allowance should be such as to meet the additional cost of maintaining the child during term time.

- In addition to a living-away-from-home allowance, return travel costs between home and school should be paid three times a year.

- For isolated children studying at home, the level of assistance should be related to that provided by way of per capita boarding allowances and should be available for the purchase or hiring of approved items of equipment, or to meet the costs associated with attendance at camp schools, and so on.

- The officials noted the proposal put forward by the ICPA that assistance should be provided where split homes were maintained for educational purposes. The officials decided that if a student's home was in the country and satisfied the conditions regarding isolation, then the boarding allowance could be payable if during the school year he or she lived in town in a second home maintained by the family specifically to enable the student to attend normal schooling.

1.10 The officials considered that the most pressing need was for assistance by way of boarding allowances for children who lived away from home. This was seen to be an area suitable for Commonwealth involvement. A universal scheme would remove some of the anomalies in the existing schemes of boarding allowances. One such anomaly was differential support of children who crossed State borders. Assistance on a national basis would simplify this problem.

1.11 A similar consideration was applied to access to School of the Air broadcasts. The officials noted that some children could not receive these broadcasts because financial hardship prevented their having access to a transceiver. It was felt that this was another area in which the Commonwealth could accept responsibility.

1.12 The redress of differences among State allowances was not seen to be an appropriate reason for the payment of travel allowances between home and approved institutions. While it was regarded by the officials as a priority area second only to the provision of boarding allowances, it was felt that, because of greater local difference, travelling allowances might not lend themselves to an across-the-board treatment in the manner of boarding allowances. This was consistent with the prior position taken by Ministers at the Australian Education Council.

1.13 While there was not total agreement about all aspects of the related roles of State and Commonwealth Governments in assisting the education of isolated children, perhaps the most significant outcome of the meeting of Commonwealth and State officials was the recommendation that there should be a Commonwealth commitment to supporting isolated students. By the time the Labor Government assumed office in December 1972, considerable progress had been made toward the development of a Commonwealth scheme.

1.14 The proposal from Mr Beazley which was accepted by Federal Cabinet in January, 1973 was for a scheme of boarding allowances for country children. Its underlying principle was the entitlement of all children to a place in a government school without regard to parents' income. The prime purpose of the allowances proposed was, therefore, to equalise the circumstances of parents who, in order to gain access for their children to a government school on a daily basis, had to bear the additional cost of their children living away from home. The amount approved was that recommended by the working party of officials in June 1972.

1.15 Details not finalised when the scheme was approved and announced were discussed at a second meeting of Commonwealth and State officials held on 30 January 1973. This meeting recommended the distance criteria for eligibility, the provision of allowances for children who live away from home to attend a school for special remedial teaching, and categories of educational expenditure which might be approved for additional correspondence allowances. In addition to these items, the officials canvassed the effect of the Commonwealth's program on existing State measures. All States except Queensland indicated that they might withdraw part or all of their boarding allowances. Queensland indicated that it would retain its remote area allowance in a modified form. In all States where bursaries were provided, the States indicated that these would be retained. With the implementation of the Commonwealth program, the States signified that for them, the provision of better educational facilities and services in rural areas was a more important priority than maintaining existing student benefits.

DEFINITION OF AN ISOLATED CHILD

1.16 The working party of Commonwealth and State officials which met on 8-9 June 1972 adopted the following definition to identify the group which might qualify for some form of assistance. It was based upon current State and Commonwealth practices.

> "An isolated child is one who because of the geographic isolation of his home does not have reasonable daily access to a government school providing courses of the appropriate level, i.e. primary or secondary".

1.17 In the determination of 'reasonable daily access' it was proposed that consideration should be given to the availability of services, regulations governing compulsory attendance, and other relevant policies of State authorities. The general principle advocated was that provisions under a Commonwealth scheme of assistance to students should not be allowed to unduly disrupt the on-going educational services of the respective State governments. The same principle motivated the inclusion of a 'government school' rather than a more comprehensive term in the definition. The intention was that financial assistance provided by the Commonwealth should not enable a student to by-pass a local government school offering an 'appropriate' program of education if, given the operation of transport services, it was reasonably accessible from his or her home.

1.18 Within the definition, three categories of students, each of which might need different forms of support were recognised. There were those who lived away from home to receive their education; those who remained at home and studied by correspondence; and those who attended school daily, but only because their parents were prepared to travel long distances using their own transport. The scheme of assistance adopted by the Commonwealth in January 1973 catered for the first two categories, but excluded the last.

1.19 In the operation of the scheme from 1973, the regulations governing eligibility amplified the criteria of geographic isolation. A student was considered not to have reasonable access if his or her home was more than ten miles from a Government school providing courses at the appropriate level and more than three miles from the nearest means of transport to that school. In addition, students were eligible if their travelling time by available transport was at least one and a half hours each way.

1.20 These distance criteria have remained substantially unaltered. Ministerial decisions to modify them have represented rationalisation rather than shifts in policy. A working party of Commonwealth and State officials which reviewed the

scheme after its first year of operation agreed that the definition of isolation should be in terms of 'at least' rather than 'more than' the specified distances. Other changes converted the mileage to metric distances of 16 kilometres from the nearest appropriate government school and at least 4.5 kilometres from the nearest transport services. Similarly the travelling time of one and a half hours each way was altered to at least three hours a day to eliminate anomalies caused by alternation of transport routes.

1.21 Some decisions were made in respect of assistance in special circumstances which broadened the base of the scheme. In addition to geographically isolated students, the following were included:

Handicapped Children

Those living away from home to attend special institutions for training to enable them to take their places in the family or community.

Those who must live at home and study by correspondence because a handicap or medical condition prevents them from attending school daily.

Students Undertaking Special Courses

Students who must live away from home to undertake special courses at approved secondary schools -

- leading to specific qualifications (e.g. a Certificate of Agriculture or a Certificate of Business Studies)
- to gain entry to a particular faculty at a tertiary institution
- which are substantially agricultural in their content (those which contain at least two agricultural subjects)
- for specially selected students with particular talents in music, art, drama, or ballet.

Short-Term and Part-Time Boarding

Students required to live away from home for periods from one week to one term to receive remedial or diagnostic treatment of an educational nature.

1.22 Each of these expanded the meaning of 'isolation' in the operation of the scheme. It was restricted no longer to children who, for geographic reasons, had no reasonable daily access to a government school, but included some who lacked access to a school providing education appropriate to their special needs or requirements. An expanded definition of the term was adopted by the Senate Standing Committee on Education

and the Arts in its *Report on Education of Isolated School Children* July, 1976). That Committee took account of the following categories of children:

1. Those children who do not have daily access to any school facilities because of the remoteness of their homes.

2. Those children living in sparsely populated areas who could be conveyed to school daily, but whose numbers are insufficient to warrant the provision of a school bus.

3. Those children living in areas where no secondary school is available and whose homes are beyond bus range of the nearest secondary school. While these children may have access to a small primary school, on reaching secondary level they must board away from home for their education or undertake their secondary education by correspondence under the supervision of a primary teacher.

4. Those children attending a small school where one teacher supervises a number of pupils in different grades.

5. Those children attending a country high school which does not offer courses at senior secondary level and where there is no full high school within daily reach by bus.

6. Those children travelling excessive distances by private vehicle and/or school bus over unsealed or unformed roads where such travel imposes hardship on children or their parents, and children whose access to schools is affected by adverse weather conditions or difficult terrain.

7. Children of itinerant or seasonal workers whose frequent changes of domicile render it impracticable for them to attend school regularly.

8. Children who require remedial instruction and who do not have access to special education facilities in their region.

9. Children suffering from short-term or long-term illnesses and physical or mental disabilities who are isolated from appropriate educational facilities by necessary confinement to their homes or to hospitals and other institutions.

1.23 In the operation of the Commonwealth Government's scheme of assistance, the definition of isolated children has come to mean those who do not have reasonable access daily to an appropriate school. This leaves open the interpretation of 'reasonable access' and an 'appropriate school'. The first term raises the question of what constitutes a reasonable limit when transporting students to school. Distance cannot be the

the sole determining factor. What is reasonable for a child in one environment might be quite unreasonable in another. Additionally, regardless of environmental considerations, one might argue that a scheme which assumes that three hours per day on a school bus for very young children is 'reasonable' access is a very limited scheme indeed.

1.24 The second term 'appropriate school' requires some consideration of what is 'appropriate' in education. The recommendation of the Commonwealth-State meeting of officials in January 1973 was that the major criterion for determining whether a school provided courses of the appropriate level should be whether the appropriate academic year of schooling was available. This limited definition excluded other considerations. For example, in a school where there are insufficient enrolments to make economic the provision of a range of subjects at appropriate levels, a student who could benefit educationally from a course not provided at that school, but taught elsewhere, might reasonably be said to be disadvantaged by isolation. The school in his or her locality is not appropriate to perceived educational needs. Similarly, the unavailability of preferred denominational schooling may be interpreted as disadvantaging an isolated student.

1.25 In these cases, factors of choice operate which may be valid educational considerations, but which are not catered for in the operational definition which has emerged in the AIC scheme. It is not intended to enable children's access to schooling of their choice. It is a scheme to ensure that benefits provided to individuals do not operate to the detriment of existing local government schools by enabling significant numbers of students to by-pass them.

THE AIC SCHEME IN PRACTICE

1.26 The principal aim of the AIC scheme has been to help parents to provide their children with reasonable access to normal schooling by subsidising the additional costs entailed. The amount of assistance provided as a basic boarding allowance in 1973 was assessed as the difference between the cost of maintaining a child at home and the average cost of maintaining him at a boarding school, hostel or private home other than the family home. It took account of the boarding allowance of $16 a week paid by the Commonwealth under its Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme. This figure was regarded as consistent with known rates then charged for the private board of school children. Boarding fees charged by non-government schools and hostels were also considered. The conclusion reached was that $16 a week represented a satisfactory estimate of the cost of maintaining a child away from home. The assessed cost of maintaining a child at home was based on a decision of the Western Australian Arbitration Commission in the Basic Wage Case in October 1970. It calculated the proportion per child of a basic wage of $49 per week would be $7.40. On this basis, it was decided that an annual boarding allowance of $350 might be

payable. This figure was derived by multiplying the difference between the accepted weekly costs of maintaining a child away from home and at home by the number of weeks in the school year.

1.27 These calculations serve to illustrate the principles which guided the policy objective of equalising access. The amount payable from public funds was regarded as assistance to parents to meet additional costs incurred by factors of isolation. Where excessive hardship was demonstrated, supplementary allowances were payable subject to means test. For children who stayed at home and studied by correspondence, the principle of equalising educational provision was taken up by the payment of an allowance which was intended to provide a contribution towards costs incurred in providing educational material and services.

1.28 If the principle that allowances payable by the Commonwealth should not enable a student to by-pass a State government school offering courses at an appropriate level is accepted, the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme has limited application. Exemptions from that principle have been granted only when evidence has been provided that, in the light of a student's assessed academic potential and the facilities available at a school within the prescribed distance of his or her home, his or her academic progress would be seriously impeded. Such exemptions have been granted only at the secondary level and with the consent of the department or authority responsible for education in the relevant State or Territory. New South Wales has had the most liberal policy of all the States in this respect. A student who by-passes a New South Wales Central School, and is undertaking at least Year 8 studies, may be eligible for assistance where the Central School provides the appropriate year of schooling but not tuition in a sufficiently wide range of subjects. The subjects being studied and the level of attainment by the student are primary considerations for eligibility.

1.29 The scheme has a subsidiary objective of providing special opportunities for talented students, but this has a restricted application. Its most significant benefit is assistance to students selected to attend special schools in the performing and graphic arts. These special cases are an extension of the objective of equalising educational opportunity. When applied to geographic isolation, the equalising principle means minimising disadvantage by compensatory funding to enable access to schooling appropriate to particular talents.

1.30 The AIC scheme also attempts to enable students who are handicapped to gain access to appropriate schooling. All government systems conduct special schools and there are also many non-government special schools in the States. Under the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme, irrespective of the distance of his home from the nearest government school, a handicapped child who lives away from home to board at a special institution which caters for his or her handicap, or

provides him or her with access to an approved school, is eligible for assistance.

ALLOWANCES PAYABLE UNDER THE SCHEME

1.31 Benefits payable under the scheme fall into three general categories:

Boarding Allowance - for children who must live away from home to attend school.

Second Home Allowance - to help towards the cost of maintaining a second home which gives the students daily access to school.

Correspondence Allowance - for students living at home and studying by correspondence

In addition, there are two minor allowances - a Short-Term Boarding Allowance for children living away from home for short periods (from one week to one term) to receive special diagnostic testing and remedial tuition, and Pre-School Correspondence Allowances applicable to children in Queensland and the Northern Territory. A summary of benefits for 1981 is provided in Table 1.1.

Boarding Allowance

1.32 Boarding allowances represent by far the most important of the benefits, covering about 75 per cent of all students assisted. Three types of allowance are provided: a Basic Boarding Allowance, an Additional Boarding Allowance, and a Special Supplementary Allowance. The latter two are subject to means tests. Where parental incomes are low and students qualify for all three, the sum of financial assistance available from the Commonwealth Government in 1981 is $2,040 for each senior secondary student, $1,920 per junior secondary student and $1,740 per primary student. (See Table 1.1).

1.33 The Basic Boarding Allowance is free of means test in recognition of the financial disadvantage caused by additional costs incurred in gaining access to normal educational services and facilities. The allowance of $350 calculated as adequate for that purpose in 1972 remained unchanged until 1977 when it was increased to $500. In August, 1980 the Treasurer announced that it would be raised to $600 in 1981. Subsequently, in his Policy Speech for the 1980 Federal election, the Prime Minister, Mr Fraser, promised that the basic boarding allowance would be increased to $780 in 1981. This was implemented in January, 1981.

1.34 Parents who have a child eligible for the Basic Boarding Allowance may apply for an Additional Boarding Allowance for that child. It is subject to a means test similar to that applied to the Tertiary Education Allowance Scheme (TEAS),

TABLE 1.1

AIC ALLOWANCES 1981

NOTE: (A) Sibling concession operates under SAS and AIC Special Supplementary Allowance
(B) Dependant's deduction is $450

TYPE OF ALLOWANCE	MEANS TEST	AMOUNT ($) MAX	AMOUNT ($) MIN	ABATEMENT RATE $ of Allowance for $ of income	AFT RANGE MEANS TEST $		
					1 Child	2 Chn	3 Chn
ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN							
1. Basic Boarding	No	780	-	-	-		
2. Additional Boarding	Yes	600	15	$1 for $5	10,312 to 13,241		
3. Special Supplementary							
. Primary	Yes	360	15	$2.50 for $10*	7,440 to 8,829	10,209	11,589
. Junior Secondary	Yes	540	15	$2.50 for $10*	7,440 to 9,549	11,649	13,749
. Senior Secondary	Yes	660	15	$2.50 for $10*	7,440 to 10,029	12,609	15,189
				(*sibling concession applies)			
4. Correspondence							
. For each eligible child	No	500	-	-	-		
5. Pre-school Correspondence	No	120	-	-	-		
6. Second Home Basic							
. 1 child	No	780	-	-	-		
. 2 children	No	1,440	-	-	-		
. 3 or more children	No	1,990	-	-	-		
7. Second Home Additional	Yes	Boarding Allowance equivalent	15	As appropriate	BAE calculated using additional boarding and special supplementary means test.		
8. Short Term Boarding	No	20 p.w.	-	-	-		

TABLE 1.2

ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN SCHEME

Benefits 1973 - 1981

	Whether Means Tested	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
		$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$	$
Basic Allowances											
. Boarding	No	350	350	350	350	500	500[b]	500	500	780	780
. Correspondence											
. Second Home - 1 Child		350[a]	350	350	500	500	500[b]	500	500	780	780
- 2 Children	No	n.a.	700	700	700	925	925[b]	925	925	1440	1440
- 3 + Children			1050	1050	1050	1275	1275	1275	1275	1990	1990
. Pre-School Correspondence	No	-	-	120	120	120	120	120	120	120	120
. Short-term Boarding ($p.w.)	No	-	10	10	10	15	15	15	15	20	20
Additional Allowances											
. Additional Boarding	Yes	350	350	350	350	450	500	500	500	600	600
. Special Supply - Primary	Yes	200	200	300	300	300	300	300	300	360	360
- Junior Secondary	Yes	304	304	450	450	450	450	450	450	540	540
- Senior Secondary	Yes	304	304	450	450	550	550	550	550	660	726
. Additional Second Home Allowance	Yes	n.a.	up to boarding allowance equivalent								
. Correspondence Reimbursement	No	150	150	150	150	300	300	300	300	n.a.	n.a.
MAFI for means tested allowances[c]											
. Additional Boarding Allowance		4200	5300	6300	7600	8200	8700	8700	9400	10312	11034
. Special Supplementary Allowance		3100	3100	3500	4300	5100	5800	5800	6200	7440	8482

Footnotes: (a) In 1973, eligible children living in second homes received boarding allowances.
(b) For 1978, a special extra grant of $100 was available for each child (B.B.A.) and for the first child (Second Home Allowance) when the family lived in Tax Zone A or B.
(c) Marginal Adjusted Family Income (MAFI).

Source: Commonwealth Department of Education

The Marginal Adjusted Family Income (MAFI) increased annually between 1973 and 1977 (see Table 1.2). In 1978 and 1979, the MAFI on which the maximum allowance ($500) was payable stood at $8,700, but it increased each year thereafter.

1.35 Where particular financial hardship can be demonstrated, a Special Supplementary Allowance is available to parents. It is subject to a means test, similar to that applied to the Secondary Allowance Scheme (SAS). It does not relate directly to actual boarding costs. The MAFI for the Special Supplementary Allowance increased annually between 1973 and 1978 and in 1980 and 1981. For 1982, if the adjusted family income does not exceed $8,482 the maximum allowance will be payable. The rate at which the allowance is reduced for incomes in excess of the MAFI depends on the number of students in the family who are eligible for boarding, second home, or correspondence allowances.

1.36 In 1978 and for the Special Supplementary Allowance only, concessions were introduced for families which had two or more children at school. Thus, for 1982, the rate at which the allowance will be reduced for income in excess of $8,482 will depend on the number of students in the family eligible for boarding, second home, or correspondence allowances. If there is only one eligible student in the family, the allowance will drop by $2.50 for every $10 in excess of $8,482. Where there is one other eligible student, the rate of drop in calculating each student's allowance will be half of this, i.e. $1.25 for every $10. Where there are two other eligible students, the rate will be one-third of the normal rate, i.e. 83 cents, and so on.

1.37 Other concessions are allowable in cases where there is a substantial drop in parental income or where parental incomes are subject to seasonal fluctuations. The circumstances in which the first apply include death, permanent invalidity or retirement of a parent, permanent separation of the parents so that the student becomes dependent on one parent only, and drought, bushfire or other circumstances beyond the control of the parents. A 'substantial' drop in income is defined as at least 30 per cent lower than that for the normal assessment period. The second, introduced in 1975, applies to persons such as primary producers who may be entitled, under the Income Tax Assessment Act, to the averaging of their incomes over a period of up to five years. This means that the adjusted family income would be calculated, not on the gross income for the preceding financial year, but on the average of gross incomes as used by the Taxation Office in calculating the income tax contribution for that year.

Second Home Allowance

1.38 To be eligible for a Second Home Allowance, a student must be living away from home at a dwelling which is accepted as an 'approved second home' for the purposes of the scheme. This includes students from a geographically isolated home who live under the care of some other person (e.g. grandmother), or in

another home maintained by the parents. In the latter case, the second home must be maintained principally to provide daily access to appropriate schooling for at least one child in the family who would not otherwise have such access. The permanent home must be the focal point of the income-earning activity of the family. Either (in the case of property owners) the earnings from the property associated with the permanent home must represent at least 70 per cent of the adjusted family income, or (in the case of other applicants) the permanent home must be situated in the locality where the family's principal income earner undertakes employment or business activity from which at least 70 per cent of the family's adjusted income is derived. Where it can be shown that the actual costs incurred in maintaining the second home exceed the amount of basic assistance, consideration is given to the payment of an additional allowance. Such consideration takes into account the level of family income and the number of eligible children in the family.

Correspondence Allowance

1.39 The basic correspondence allowance, which is not subject to a means test, stood at $200 p.a. from 1973 to 1980. Additional allowances such as reimbursement of expenditure incurred on approved items stood at a maximum of $150 p.a. from 1973 to 1976 inclusive. From 1977, they were increased to $300 p.a. Reimbursement normally was made only in respect of actual amounts spent. However, concessions were permitted for those who could not afford to pay enrolment and accommodation costs for attendance at activities such as camp schools, even in anticipation of eventual reimbursement from the correspondence allowance. In such cases, payments were made in advance to cover specified costs.

1.40 In August 1980, the Commonwealth Treasurer announced that for 1981 the Correspondence Allowance structure would be changed. It would no longer be necessary to prove expenditure on a small range of specific items to qualify for the Correspondence Reimbursement Allowance. All parents of correspondence students were to receive a means-test-free annual payment of $500 for the first child, $400 for the second, and $300 for each other child. This proposal was subsequently replaced by a flat rate of $500 per child as from the beginning of 1981.

1.41 In Queensland and the Northern Territory, Pre-School Correspondence Allowances are payable for each child enrolled for the full school year in the courses conducted by the Queensland Education Department or the Katherine or Alice Springs School of the Air. The allowance of $120 p.a. is not means tested. As with the Basic Correspondence Allowance, it is intended to assist parents with the costs involved in purchasing a cassette recorder and other teaching aids, equipment and books involved in the course, as well as with postage costs.

Short-Term Boarding Allowance

1.42 To be eligible for the Short-Term Boarding Allowance, a student must live away from home for a period of not less than one week and not more than one school term, for diagnostic testing and/or remedial tuition at a special school or institution controlled by a State Education Department or similar authority. The approved programs include short-term remedial instruction at the Chidley Educational Centre, Perth, the one-week intensive remedial reading course at the Duffy Remedial Reading Centre, Sydney, and the three-month on-the-job training course conducted by the National Association for Training the Disabled in Office Work (NADOW, NSW). Evidence must be supplied that the student needs remedial tuition, rather than merely increased individual attention or the kind of modified course generally available to slow-learners in non-specialist schools. Such evidence is normally required from State Education Department guidance authorities or from authorities in non-government education systems.

State Allowances

1.43 In addition to conveyance and travel allowances, which have always remained State responsibilities, some States provide other assistance to children from isolated areas. A summary of those allowances is provided in Table 1.3. The largest allowances are paid by the Queensland Government.

TABLE 1.3

STATE ALLOWANCES FOR STUDENTS LIVING AWAY FROM HOME, 1981

STATE	ALLOWANCE	CONDITIONS	MEANS TEST
NEW SOUTH WALES	SECONDARY PUPILS' LIVING AWAY FROM HOME ALLOWANCE (a) $207.00 p.a. if not in receipt of Commonwealth AIC (b) $170.00 p.a. if in receipt of Commonwealth AIC (to be raised to parity with the maximum allowance in 1982).	The student must have to travel more than 45 km each way or travelling time exceeds 1½ hours each way.	Adjusted Family Income $17,500.00 (taxable income less $544 for spouse and $400 for each dependent child).
VICTORIA	LIVING AWAY FROM HOME ALLOWANCE $80.00 p.a.	(a) children living outside a 30km radius of GPO Melbourne are eligible	Not means tested.

STATE	ALLOWANCE	CONDITIONS	MEANS TEST
VICTORIA (Cont'd)	LIVING AWAY FROM HOME ALLOWANCE	(b) need to reside away from home to attend an approved post-primary school. (c) not eligible for Commonwealth AIC.	
QUEENSLAND	REMOTE AREA ALLOWANCE		
	Years 4-7 $320 p.a. Years 8-10 $400 p.a. Years 11-12 $500 p.a.	(a) student's residence is 4.8km from nearest approved school or school transport service. (b) more than 32 km travelling distance (each way) on transport service; or (c) more than 1 hour's travelling time (each way) on transport service.	Not means tested
	SENIOR REMOTE AREA SCHOLARSHIP		
	Up to $1,200 p.a. on basis of family income	(a) student must be in years 11-12. (b) must qualify for State Remote Area Allowance (c) must have achieved a minimum of 24 points in six Board of Secondary School Studies approved subjects for the Junior Certificate.	Adjusted Family Income $20,896 (gross income less $500 for each student other than the first student) attending an approved boarding school.
	STUDENT ALLOWANCES		
	(a) $54 p.a. for students living at home	(a) available for students in years 8-12 only.	Adjusted Family Income according to basic wage area and number of dependent children: range $4667 to $8642.

STATE	ALLOWANCE	CONDITIONS	MEANS TEST
QUEENSLAND (Cont'd)	(b) $222 p.a. for students living away from home.	(b) eligibility for living away from home on same conditions as the Remote Area Allowance.	
SOUTH AUSTRALIA	EDUCATIONAL ALLOWANCE FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS		
	$500 p.a. for students living away from home to attend an approved secondary school.	(a) secondary students who board away from home. (b) students must live 8 km or more from nearest school and at least 4.5 km from the nearest bus route	Not means tested
WESTERN AUSTRALIA	BOARDING AWAY FROM HOME ALLOWANCE		
	$250 p.a. to supplement Commonwealth AIC to ensure a combined basic boarding allowance of $1030.	(a) eligible for Commonwealth AIC. (b) more than 16 km from an appropriate school and more than 4.5 km from nearest transport service to that school. (c) children not eligible under distance criteria but who for medical reasons or because of special talent need to board away from home to attend special schools.	(a) allowance reduced $1 for $1 of additional allowances paid under Commonwealth AIC. (b) paid in form of vouchers tenable at a school or hostel. The organisation concerned obtains cash recoup.
TASMANIA	No specific allowance aimed at isolated children. Minor allowances and bursaries available to all students		

STATE	ALLOWANCE	CONDITIONS	MEANS TEST
TASMANIA (Cont'd)	SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ALLOWANCE		
	$100 for year 10 students.		Adjusted Family Income $7850 p.a.
	SECONDARY MUSIC SCHOLARSHIPS (limited number)		
	$240 tuition fees		
	KING ISLAND BURSARY (for matriculation study)		Not means tested
	1 at $100 p.a.		
	SCOTTSDALE BURSARY (for matriculation study)		Not means tested
	1 at $100 p.a.		
NORTHERN TERRITORY	SUPPLEMENTARY BOARDING ALLOWANCE		
	Years 1-5 $150 p.a. Years 6-7 $290 p.a. Years 8-10 $360 p.a. Years 11-12 $450 p.a.	(a) Supplementary to AIC Boarding Allowance or Second Home Allowance	Not means tested
	SUPPLEMENTARY CORRESPONDENCE ALLOWANCE	(a) Supplementary to AIC Correspondence Allowance	Not means tested
	$50 p.a.		

1.44 In 1981, benefits under the Queensland Remote Area Allowance ranged from $320 p.a. to $500 p.a. In addition, students in Years 11 and 12 have access to competitive scholarships which are means tested, but which may pay a benefit as high as $1,200 p.a. This means that it is possible in certain circumstances for a family on a low income with a child in Year 11 or 12 to receive as much as $2,546 p.a. In ordinary circumstances, parents of children in receipt of the Basic Boarding Allowances under the AIC scheme and the Remote Area Allowance of the Queensland Government, receive combined minimum benefits ranging from $1,100 p.a. to $1,280 p.a. free of means test.

1.45 Between 1976 and 1980, the Western Australian Government supplemented AIC boarding allowances to ensure a minimum total payment from Commonwealth and State sources of at least $150 above the AIC basic allowance for each student. From the beginning of 1980, the Boarding Away from Home Subsidy was increased to $250 a year. Therefore, students in receipt of AIC Basic Boarding Allowance in 1981 qualify for a minimum combined allowance of $1,030 p.a.

1.46 In the Northern Territory, the Government has provided from the beginning of 1978, a supplementary allowance of $150 p.a. to $450 p.a. depending on the level of schooling for each child eligible for boarding allowance under AIC, and a supplementary allowance of $50 p.a. for each child eligible for a correspondence allowance. New South Wales revised its allowances from the beginning of 1980. In that State, the Secondary Pupils' Living away From Home Allowance is payable at a rate of $207 p.a. for students not in receipt of the Commonwealth's AIC benefits and $170 p.a. for those who are. It is intended that in 1982 a uniform level of allowances will be provided. For 1981, and subject to a means test qualification, secondary students are eligible for a minimum combined allowance of $950 p.a. South Australia introduced from the beginning of third term 1980 a boarding allowance of $500, thereby guaranteeing a minimum combined allowance of $1,280 p.a. in 1981. In Victoria, the Living Away from Home Allowance is $80 p.a., but it is payable only to those who do not qualify for Commonwealth allowances. Tasmania is the only State which does not make direct payments to students living away from home, but it maintains a system of government-owned hostels.

1.47 Conditions for eligibility vary among the States. The allowances in two States, Victoria and South Australia, and the Remote Area Allowance in Queensland, are not subject to means test. New South Wales applies an adjusted family income means test. In Western Australia, an anomolous provision operates. The guaranteed minimum allowance is $1,030 p.a., but the reduction of the Boarding Away from Home Allowance by amounts equal to additional allowances paid under the AIC scheme means that low-income families are proportionately disadvantaged by the operation of the State scheme.

SUMMARY

1.48 The AIC scheme introduced by the Commonwealth Government in 1973 was intended to provide financial assistance to parents of children compelled to live away from home to attend a normal school or to study by correspondence because their homes were in geographically isolated areas. While that remains the principal function of the scheme, it has undergone modifications at various stages in its operation to provide financial assistance to other special categories of students to enable their access to appropriate schools. There is not a requirement that beneficiaries under the scheme must attend a government school,

but one of the continuing principles has been that benefits should not enable students to by-pass government schools reasonably accessible from their homes. Exceptions are allowed with the consent of the responsible State authorities if it can be demonstrated that attendance at other than a local school is in the student's educational interests.

1.49 The Boarding and Correspondence Allowances provided under the scheme are intended as financial assistance to parents, supplementing other educational provisions of the States and not in competition with them. Because they have been traditionally a State responsibility, conveyance and travel allowances are excluded from the scheme.

1.50 At the time of the inception of the AIC scheme, it was considered that children living in geographically isolated areas were equally disadvantaged in their schooling. Private disposable incomes of their parents did not alleviate this disadvantage. Therefore, basic allowances have not been subjected to means tests. To promote the educational opportunities of children from low income families, means-tested additional and supplementary allowances were made available.

1.51 In all of the States except Victoria and Tasmania, the allowances payable by the Commonwealth are supplemented by living-away-from-home allowances from the State Governments. The conditions and qualifications for eligibility differ among the States, but their fundamental purpose in each instance is to advance the educational opportunities of children who otherwise would be denied access to schools by the geographic isolation of their homes.

CHAPTER 2 PROVISION FOR THE EDUCATION OF ISOLATED CHILDREN

2.1 The primary responsibility for the provision of educational services and facilities at the school level belongs to the State Governments. The role of the Commonwealth is important, but secondary. Commonwealth funding of school-level education has been directed at three broad objectives:

(i) Supporting the provision by the States and private authorities of basic education services to a desirable standard for all children.

(ii) Making special provision for servicing the additional educational needs of particular groups in the population, especially those for which the Commonwealth bears special responsibility (migrants, refugees, Aborigines).

(iii) Providing benefits to individual students which enhance their capacity to take advantage of available educational services (e.g. living allowances, fee supplements, and other forms of student assistance).

2.2 The first two objectives have been pursued by the Commonwealth using the conditional grants power (s. 96) of the Constitution. Funds have been provided as grants to the States for the support of general or particular educational services. The third objective, made possible by the 'benefits to students' power in s. 51XIIIA of the Commonwealth Constitution, has been pursued by direct payments to students - as in the case of the AIC Scheme. However, these individual benefits must be considered in the context of the educational services which are made available to students by government and non-government aurhorities.

SERVICES AND FACILITIES IN RURAL AREAS

2.3 Government primary schools generally are located wherever there are sufficient numbers to justify the appointment of a teacher. The determination of a 'sufficient number' is problematic and varies among the States. The Regulations of the Western Australian Education Department serve to illustrate:

159(1).. A full-time government primary school may be established in any locality where in the opinion of the Minister -

(a) the permanence of settlement is sufficiently assured and there is reasonable prospect of a continued average attendance of not less than ten children between the ages of six years and fourteen years; or

(b) there is reasonable prospect of an average attendance of eight children, a suitable room is available, and there is no other government school within 5 kilometres of the locality; or

(c) there is a reasonable prospect of an average attendance of eight children within twelve months, the school is in a remote area where settlement is in progress, and a suitable school room is made available by the parents.

2.4 In Australia, as in other countries with comparable economies, as farming became capital intensive and there was a consequent de-population of rural areas, public policies led to a diminution of the number of very small country schools. Primary education was consolidated in schools in regional towns and centres, small schools were closed down, and children were transported by bus over often long distances to a district school. Reservations are now being expressed about this response to the perceived lack of economic and educational viability of the one-teacher rural school and there is a revival of interest in the educational and social benefits they offer within their communities. However, the legacy of public policies of consolidation is the absence of primary schools in many isolated rural districts in Australia. Alternative strategies for the delivery of educational services, namely correspondence tuition, busing children to district schools, and boarding children outside their own communities are characteristics of education for these areas.

2.5 Secondary education up to year 10 is provided in all States at schools in larger towns in rural districts. These schools are variously named: central schools or primary schools with secondary 'tops' in New South Wales, higher elementary and consolidated schools in Victoria, primary schools with secondary departments in Queensland, special rural schools in South Australia, district high schools in Western Australia, and district schools in Tasmania. Depending on their enrolments, these schools usually provide a limited range of subjects at the junior secondary level. Courses accredited for matriculation are provided in Senior High Schools, or in the case of Tasmania, in Colleges in larger urban centres. Comprehensive bus services transport students from surrounding districts to these schools.

2.6 In effect, although State Governments have attempted to provide an equitable range of services, there are structural limitations which affect access to schools. Central to these limitations is the relatively high cost of the delivery of needed educational services in sparsely populated areas. Isolation is a function of distance and the distribution of population, and both contribute significantly to cost structures. Population sparsity ensures relatively high per-pupil costs for transportation, specialised services and programs, equipment and materials, and the construction and

maintenance of school facilities. Governments must choose between the provision of 'normal' services and alternatives which offer the most equitable educational opportunities.

COMPENSATORY ALTERNATIVES

2.7 Because the provision of an extensive structure catering for the full range of educational activities is not financially viable, governments have maintained alternative programs to give country children access to schooling. These include correspondence schools and Schools of the Air; subsidised hostel accommodation, co-ordinated in some States by a hostels authority; and, transportation of students between their homes and primary and secondary schools in their districts.

Correspondence Schools

2.8 Correspondence tuition is provided by all State Departments of Education. It is available to children who do not have reasonable daily access to schools, special categories of incapacitated children who cannot attend school daily and must study at home, families who are travelling within Australia or overseas, secondary students (usually at early stages) who do not have access to appropriate courses of study at schools in their locality, and adults who want to complete their own school-level education or who want to study school-level subjects to meet occupational requirements. The organisational structure differs among the States. In Queensland, a Pre-School Correspondence Unit, a Primary Correspondence School and a Secondary Correspondence School provide courses ranging from pre-school for those who will enrol in Year 1 in the ensuing year in the Primary Correspondence School or one-teacher (class 5 or 6) primary schools, to Year 12; in Western Australia, the Distance Education Centre offers a similar range of courses and makes special provision for students preparing for the Tertiary Admissions Examination through the Isolated Student's Matriculation Scheme; in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, courses from kindergarten to Year 12 are provided through the Correspondence Schools, each of which has a primary and a secondary department; and in Tasmania, courses at the primary level, school certificate studies, and the higher school certificate level are provided by the External Studies Service of the Division of Further Education.

2.9 The curricula pursued are compatible with those approved for government primary schools or meet the requirements for certification at the secondary level. Hence, in Queensland, the Secondary Correspondence School conducts courses to meet syllabus requirements of the external examinations conducted by the Board of Secondary School Studies to qualify for the Junior and Senior Certificate; in Western Australia, the Distance Education Centre provides courses accredited for the Achievement Certificate awarded by the Board of Secondary Education and, through the Isolated Student's Matriculation Scheme, some courses which are appropriate for the syllabuses

of the Tertiary Admissions Examination; in Tasmania, the External Studies Service provides a limited range of subjects which follow the course specifications of the Schools Board for the School Certificate and the external examinations for the Higher School Certificate conducted by the Schools Board; and in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, the secondary-level courses meet the requirements of the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate, as appropriate, in those States.

2.10 In general, students enrolled with correspondence schools are provided with essential learning materials free of charge (including audio tapes and, in some instances, audio-visual aids on loan) and lending-library facilities. Comprehensive lessons are prepared in discrete units for completion at home and for marking and assessment by correspondence tutors. In most States, the correspondence schools are in the capital cities, but in some, provision is made for localised supervision through Schools of the Air or regional correspondence tuition centres.

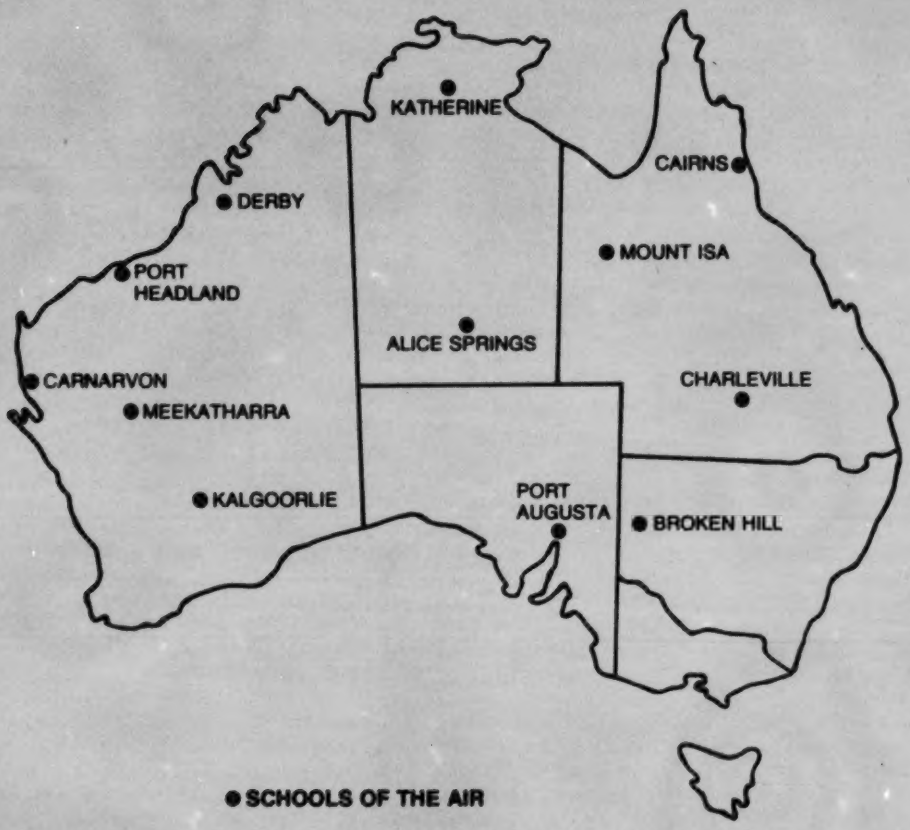
Schools of the Air

2.11 Primary schooling through the Schools of the Air is a unique development in education in Australia. They are operated usually in conjunction with the Royal Flying Doctor Service radio network at four centres in Western Australia, three in Queensland, and one each in New South Wales and South Australia. Two schools in the Northern Territory have their own radio facilities.

2.12 Essentially, the intention is to give children in remote areas daily contact with a teacher and with fellow students. Children gain a group identity as a result of such lessons. Assistance is given to home supervisors in such aspects of their task as teaching techniques, daily lesson plans, and assignment completion. Also, Schools of the Air co-operate in activities of local Parents and Citizens' Associations which seek to lessen the educational disadvantage suffered by their children.

2.13 Only primary students are enrolled with these schools and, in general, the pupils have a half-hour session each day in which they participate in two-way group broadcasts. The courses studied are those of primary correspondence schools. The main functions of the Schools of the Air are to develop and supplement the correspondence courses in each subject area, and to provide work in areas such as music where opportunities for group work or performance might otherwise be restricted. In Western Australia, South Australia, and the New South Wales School of the Air, teachers mark all work completed by their pupils. In Queensland they are under the direct supervision of teachers at the Primary Correspondence School located in Brisbane. A pilot project for localised dispatch and marking of lessons conducted at the Charleville School of the Air between 1975 and 1979 demonstrated the efficacy of that scheme, but it

FIGURE 2.1 LOCATION OF SCHOOLS OF THE AIR



was not adopted State-wide and the pilot scheme was abandoned. In some States, itinerant teachers complement the work of Schools of the Air by occasional home visits for assessment and advice.

2.14 To be enrolled, pupils must be domiciled within range of the Royal Flying Doctor Transmitters/Receivers. Those families who do not possess a transceiver are issued with one owned by the State Departments of Education. In Western Australia, about half of the full-time correspondence pupils are enrolled with a School of the Air. In Queensland, the Schools of the Air serve about 70 per cent of the primary correspondence school pupils eligible for enrolment with them. The percentage of the total enrolment of correspondence pupils ranges from 25-50 across the States. In 1981, 170 pupils were

enrolled at the Broken Hill School of the Air, of whom 50 lived in South Australia. The latter are supervised by a teacher from the South Australian Department of Education and the courses are those of the South Australian Correspondence School. New South Wales pupils are taught from Correspondence School leaflets adapted by School of the Air staff.

Hostel Accommodation

2.15 Only in Tasmania does the State Government fully maintain hostels for students. In two States, South Australia and Victoria, no provision is made and in the remaining three States, various subsidies are provided for capital outlay to establish hostels and per capita assistance for running costs. In Western Australia, the Country High Schools Hostels Authority co-ordinates affiliated non-government hostels.

2.16 There are ten hostels owned and maintained by the Education Department of Tasmania. They accommodate 450 high school, matriculation, and technical college students, and 170 block-release (2-3 weeks at a time) apprentices. There is provision also, at one hostel, for excursion groups, usually country children from remote areas. The Education Department employs a Hostels Executive Officer to administer hostel functions and a subsidy fund to assist hostels where numbers occasionally fall below an economic viability level. Normally, hostels are paid a per capita boarding subsidy ($2.50 per week per boarder in 1981) and the Department pays the wages of a full time cook, a full time matron, grounds staff, and house master/mistresses at an approximate 1:10 supervisor-boarder ratio. Fees charged by the Tasmanian hostels (in 1981 $30-$31 per week) are retained by them to meet additional running costs, house staff, and minor maintenance.

2.17 The Country High Schools Hostels Authority in Western Australia supervises the activities of twelve hostels in nine country centres (separate hostels for boys and girls are maintained at Geraldton and Northam and there are two hostels at Albany, one of which is co-educational). Two other hostels at Bunbury and Carnarvon were closed at the end of 1978. In addition, the Anglican Church maintains Swanleigh Hostel with places for 350 secondary students, the Fairbridge Farm School at Pinjarra was converted to hostel accommodation in 1980, and three independent but small hostels are maintained at Kalgoorlie, Mt Barker, and Kununurra.

2.18 Enrolments in the Western Australian Hostel Authority hostels have progressively declined from an average of 1237 in 1973 to 965 for first term 1981 and fees have risen in the same period from an average $176 per term to $700. Together with Swanleigh, those hostels are paid a per-capita subsidy of $3 to $6 per week by the State Government.

2.19 Per capita payments of $143 per annum are made to hostels in Queensland which cater for primary, secondary, and special school students. They are conducted by recognised non-profit organisations and are registered with local authorities which have responsibility for standards of accommodation and facilities. A 50 per cent subsidy is available on all approved capital expenditure incurred by the Queensland Country Womens' Association or a local authority in establishing, improving, or equipping a student hostel. This assistance has been extended from time to time to other approved organisations.

2.20 A similar subsidy for capital outlay is available in New South Wales. Assistance calculated on a $2 for $1 basis to a maximum of $100,000 depending upon the availability of funds, is available for the construction and/or acquisition and equipping of suitable hostel premises. The policy of the Department of Education is that such hostels should be self-supporting and the grants are available only on condition that an acceptable local committee is prepared to undertake the conduct of a hostel on that basis. The minimum number of secondary students to be catered for in each hostel is twenty children who might otherwise be involved in excessive travelling to and from school.

2.21 A comprehensive survey of living away from home facilities for isolated students conducted by the Planning Branch of the Queensland Department of Education gave a pessimistic prognosis which might have implications for all States: "... it is clearly evident ... that present arrangements are far from satisfactory. In many cases children who live away from home must endure, not only the problems of separation from their families, but also the physical discomfort of poor quality facilities and the emotional upheavals of living regimented lives".[1] This was echoed in the study undertaken for the Uniting Church National Mission: "Hostels were seen as providing basic accommodation facilities, with little regard for whether the care was effective and of a high standard",[2]

2.22 A general conclusion which emerged from surveying the literature, discussions with officials, parents and other interested and expert parties is that, with the exception of Tasmania and possibly Western Australia, there is inadequate provision of facilities for children who must live away from home to attend school and who, for whatever reason, do not have access to a boarding school.

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1. Lenahan, R. and others. *A report on living away from home facilities for isolated students in Queensland.* Brisbane: Department of Education, Queensland, 1980, p.110.

2. Fagg, K.A. *Student Hostels.* Uniting Church National Mission, July 1980, p.167.

Transportation of Students

2.23 Assistance in respect of direct transportation by government-funded services, subsidised fares for school children travelling on public transport services, and conveyance allowances payable to parents who transport their children to and from school in privately-owned vehicles is considerable and diversified. The general provision is a major financial cost borne by State Governments. Partial figures from two States illustrate the magnitude of the cost. They relate to bus contracts for transporting children to school, mainly in country areas. In Western Australia for 1980, a total of 783 contracts, of which 68 were for the transportation of students to special schools in the metropolitan area, the annual cost was $12,292,813. In the previous year, for a total of 762 contracts, the expenditure was $10,415,922. Tasmania, in 1980, let 404 contracts at an approximate annual cost of $5,845,680 (a contract price per week of $146,142 for a 40 week school year). This represented 86 per cent of the total cost borne by government in that State for the transportation of students.

2.24 The particular public transport provisions for country children form part of the general provision in all States. Three forms of services are of particular concern in rural areas. These are conveyance allowances payable to parents, contract bus services, and travel assistance for students who live away from home. These services are summarised by State in Table 2.1

2.25 The major financial allocation by governments is for contract bus services. In South Australia some services are provided in government owned and controlled vehicles. Elsewhere, school bus services are let by contract on conditions and at rates determined by State regulations. Local school and district committees participate in establishing bus routes according to particular circumstances within the general regulations. Conditions applying to the payment of conveyance allowances indicate notable disparity among the States. The minimum distance qualification ranges from 1.6 km in New South Wales to 4.8 km in South Australia, Victoria and Queensland. Rates of payment are calculated on an amount per day in New South Wales and Victoria, an annual allowance in Queensland, and an amount per kilometre travelled in Western Australia and Tasmania. South Australia provides a daily car allowance on a scale weighted by the distance travelled.

2.26 The provisions for children who live away from home is of particular interest to this study. It was a matter considered by the Commonwealth-State meeting of officials in June 1972 which first studied the educational needs of isolated children. It noted the differences among the States but, because transportation of isolated children is an integral part of State policies for transport, recommended that it should remain a State responsibility. The current provisions in New South Wales are for the free transport on government buses and

trains, in Queensland free second-class rail travel, and only in Western Australia (in certain areas) and Tasmania is special provision made for children to be transported to and from their schools or places of board. In Tasmania, an allowance equal to the cost of public transport is payable and in Western Australia vouchers are issued on application for subsidised fares (equal to the cost of three return journeys) on the most appropriate form of transport. In the case of the latter, additional allowances are payable to parents who travel more than 80 kilometres to the nearest terminal from their home. It seems that, with the exception of school bus services, provision for student travel is very uneven and largely inadequate in most States. Parents in country areas are expected to provide from their private resources for the major cost of transporting their children to and from school.

TABLE 2.1

TRANSPORATION OF STUDENTS

CONVEYANCE ALLOWANCE	CONTRACT BUS SERVICE	STUDENTS LIVING AWAY FROM HOME
NEW SOUTH WALES		
Children conveyed more than 1.6 km by private vehicle (single journey). Rates range from 61 cents per child per day up to 8 km to $7.50 per child per day where the single distance is more than 90 km.	Contracts let subject to a guaranteed number of children over a period of years and the availability of a suitable vehicle and driver.	Free travel for children who live more than 1.6 km from school when travelling on government buses and trains.
VICTORIA		
Children conveyed more than 4.8 km by private vehicle (single journey). Maximum allowance 25 cents for each day's attendance.	Contracts let subject to 15 primary pupils or 12 secondary students who reside more than 4.8 km from school	
QUEENSLAND		
Children conveyed more than 4.8 km by private vehicle (single journey).	Contracts let when a number of children reside more than 4.8 km from school. Suitable vehicles: sedans, station sedans, panel vans, utilities, buses.	Free second-class rail transport to travel to and from school at vacations and weekends.

CONVEYANCE ALLOWANCE	CONTRACT BUS SERVICE	STUDENTS LIVING AWAY FROM HOME
QUEENSLAND (Cont'd)		
Rates (per annum) 4.8 km to 9.5 km $ 93 9.6 km to 14.3 km $129 14.4 km to 19.2 km $177 Over 19.2 km $219	Rates range from 40.2 cents per km to 93.5 cents per km according to number of children carried	
SOUTH AUSTRALIA		
Children conveyed 5.0 km or more to nearest Govt. school or transport service 5 - 7 km $0.85 7 - 9 km $1.19 9 - 11 km $1.53 11 - 13 km $1.87 13 - 15 km $2.21 15 - 17 km $2.55 17 - 19 km $2.89	Fully paid services operated by private contractors where not less than 10 children travel at least 4.8 kms, provided that the majority travel more than 8.0 kms. Fully paid services operated by departmental buses where there is no contracted service. Subsidised services operated by parents where at least 7 children travel not less than 4.8 km, provided that the majority travel more than 8.0 kms.	
WESTERN AUSTRALIA		
Children conveyed more than 4.5 km by private vehicle (single journey). Rate 5.2 cents per km.	Contracts let subject to 11 children living beyond 4.5 km from school. Contractor must provide bus approved to detailed specifications.	Every child within a defined area of State entitled to two return and two single journeys on most suitable transport. Road travel subsidy 9 cents per km when parents reside more than 80 km from nearest transport

CONVEYANCE ALLOWANCE	CONTRACT BUS SERVICE	STUDENTS LIVING AWAY FROM HOME
TASMANIA		
Children conveyed more than 8 km by private vehicle (single journey). Rates: Not more than 4 km from school, 40 cents first child and 10 cents per second child. More than 4 km: additional 10 cents per km in excess of 4 km for 1st child.	Contracts let subject to appropriate number of children.	Living at Boarding Establishment with occasional home visits: Allowance payable equal to cost of public transport at commencement of each period. Living at Hostel Allowance payable at beginning and end of each term and at long weekends.
NORTHERN TERRITORY		
7 cents per kilometre. Two return journeys to or from school or a bus service to a maximum of 100 km per day where student lives at least 5 kms from the nearest appropriate school or bus service.		Fares reimbursed for three return trips home annually. For escorts of children with disabilities, fares reimbursed for up to six trips annually. When travel by private vehicle is necessary, reimbursement at the rate of 7 cents per km.

EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE IN RURAL AREAS

2.27 The benefits and utility of standard responses to long-standing rural educational problems have come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. Various studies published since 1975 have demonstrated that intrinsic educational disadvantage exists in all rural areas. In some respects, this is by no means a recent phenomenon. As early as 1939, W.C. Radford analysed the educational and cultural life of the Bairnsdale region of Victoria. His study demonstrated considerable discontinuity between perceived vocational opportunity (mainly in agriculture, home-making, skilled trades, commerce, and to a limited extent, the professions), vocational guidance and educational preparation within local schools. It revealed also a dearth of certain amenities for social and cultural life, "a rural community relatively poverty stricken in opportunities for reading and social and cultural recreation", which caused

Radford to observe, "Rural exodus is inevitable under such conditions ... cultural and social isolation and the absence of all those opportunities for social intercourse which are readily available for town dwellers are powerful agencies working against the existence in rural areas of a contented, enlightened, and able farming community".[4]

2.28 That study was conducted at a time when vocational opportunities were less diverse, community values less pluralistic, and transport and communication less sophisticated than at present, but some of its observations remain pertinent for rural Australia. More recent research has focused upon similar problems. The report on "Poverty and Education"[5] to the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty identified country children, along with early school leavers and migrants, as 'children at risk'. It isolated five educational and vocational factors of disadvantage: early leaving, the need for qualifications, aspirations and expectations, structural limits, and mobility. Commissioned studies in Queensland and Tasmania observed that:

- Country children leave school earlier than those in cities.
- The lack of opportunities for a career makes the effective use of schools especially important for most country children.
- The pattern of low levels of achievement by rural students is associated with low aspirations and expectations.
- For many students in isolated rural areas, access to extended secondary schooling is structurally limited because schools provide only for the compulsory years.
- Because of the limited years of secondary schooling available in district schools and the secondary departments, young people who wish to complete their secondary education are forced to leave the school and often the district.

2.29 Similar findings were recorded for the north-western region of New South Wales in a study conducted between 1977 and

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4. Radford, W.C. *The Educational Needs of Rural Community*. ACER Research Series No. 56, Melbourne University Press, 1939, pp. 73-74.

5. Fitzgerald, R.T. *Poverty and Education in Australia*. Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, Fifth Main Report, June 1976. Canberra: AGPS, 1976, pp. 62-65.
see also: Behrens, N., Musgrave, P.W. and Wind, E. *School Community and Work: Urban and Rural Prospects*, and McGaw, B., Warry, R.S., Varley, J. and Alcorn, J. *School Leavers: Choice and Opportunity*. Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, Poverty and Education Series. Canberra: AGPS, 1978.

1979. Students in schools in that region were found to have comparatively low levels of reading achievement, inadequate knowledge of vocational choice, and restricted opportunities for employment both within their home towns and elsewhere. A consistent pattern of evidence drew the conclusions that, "students in the studies were clearly disadvantaged both in the teaching and curriculum they were experiencing", and "compared with age mates in urban communities, they had lower levels of self-esteem, higher levels of anxiety about self-adequacy, and a greater tendency to view themselves as having little personal control over learning achievement at school".[6] As with the findings reported by Fitzgerald, student motivation was observed to be poor, and this was exacerbated by antagonistic attitudes to schooling.

2.30 There is some evidence, yet to be replicated and validated, that the observed inadequacies of rural education are not confined to secondary schools. An ACER study of some 1200 students in 50 primary schools, mainly located in New South Wales and Victoria, addressed itself in part to the effects of geographic location on educational attainments. It found that this had marked effects on achievement. Other things being equal, students attending rural primary schools seem disadvantaged in contrast with their urban counterparts, and, according to an 'index of rurality' constructed for the survey, as rurality increases, mastery learning diminishes: "other things being equal, each unit of school rurality is associated with one per cent fewer students achieving mastery of Literacy and Numeracy".[7] The research evidence suggested that the difference between rural and urban schools in the extreme is that 29 per cent fewer of the most 'rural' students achieve mastery of literacy and numeracy compared with their urban counterparts. This was seen simply as a function of attending a rural primary school.

COUNTRY AREAS PROGRAM

2.31 One response to the perceived educational disadvantages of children in country areas has been the range of activities and services funded through the Commonwealth Schools Commission's Country Areas Program. In its 1976 Report, the Commission suggested that, "Quite apart from ... social and cultural influences, it is clear that country students often suffer disadvantage directly due to the lower levels of educational services offered in many areas".[8] Because of this concern for

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6. Turney, C., Sinclair, K.E. and Cairns, L.G. *Isolated Schools, Teaching, Learning and Transition to Work.* Sydney University Press, 1980, p.113.

7. Williams, T., Batten, M. Girling-Butcher, S. and Clancy, J. *School and Work in Prospect: 14 Year-olds in Australia.* ACER Research Monograph No. 10. Hawthorn: ACER, 1981, p.54.

8. Schools Commission. *Report. Rolling Triennium 1977-79,* July, 1976. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1976, p.65.

the problems of country children, the Disadvantaged Country Areas Program was implemented in 1977. The funds made available were to finance programs to enrich the educational experiences of children living in those country areas declared to be disadvantaged or having special needs. A wide range of options was canvassed by the Commission, including the deployment of mobile services and the transportation of students to facilities in regional centres. The mobile units might include "travelling theatre groups, science laboratories, art displays, mobile workshops, and libraries and career education units". Advisory and specialist services could be expanded, centres established for limited stay, or itinerant teacher programs implemented. The areas to be given priority funding were to be jointly identified by government and non-government education authorities and the programs were to be planned and executed on a joint basis in consultation with teachers and parents from schools in the areas.

2.32 The program was envisaged by the Commission to be the beginning of extended action to widen the opportunities available to disadvantaged country students. It recognised that the limited funds available would do no more than allow pilot action in a limited number of areas. In 1977, fifteen areas were declared disadvantaged by the Commonwealth Minister on the advice of the States. They were selected on the basis of their relative poverty, their special need for improved educational provision and outcomes, and the lack of oppotunities for employment and further training for young people. In 1980, there were twenty declared disadvantaged country areas throughout Australia involving approximately 590 schools, enrolling some 73,000 students.

2.33 In its *Report for the Triennium 1982-84* the Commission acknowledged that the value and practicability of the program had been established, and recommended new directions for its development. These recommendations were accepted by the Government. The Program is to be called the Country Areas Program. The Commission proposed that the funds for the program be increased above the prevailing level in each year of the triennium. The proposed funding from 1982 to 1984 is summarised in Table 2.1.

2.34 For 1982, the Minister for Education approved an increase in funds of $1.5 million and the new criteria for the allocation of funds in terms of relative isolation and size of settlements.[9] Modifications of program administration also have been accepted. Greater discretion over the disbursement of funds, the declaration of regions and their participation in the program has been granted to the States. However, there are still requirements that regional committees to oversee local initiatives be constituted in accordance with the joint and community nature of the program, and that funded activities have parent and teacher support.

9. *Statement on Commonwealth Education Policy and Financial Guidelines to the Commonwealth Education Commissions* by the Minister for Education, The Hon. Wal. Fife, 4 June 1981, p. 40.

TABLE 2.1

COUNTRY AREAS PROGRAM, STAGES IN PHASE-IN OF BOTH NEW FUNDING BASIS, AND INCREASE IN FUNDS, 1981 TO 1984 (IN ESTIMATED DECEMBER 1980 PRICES)

State/ Territory	Existing		Proposed					
	1981		1982		1983		1984	
	$'000	%	$'000	%	$'000	%	$'000	%
NSW	1,688	28.56	1,951	27.06	2,214	26.01	2,477	25.25
Vic	957	16.19	1,126	15.62	1,295	15.22	1,465	14.93
Qld	1,388	23.48	1,718	23.82	2,048	24.06	2,378	24.24
SA	455	7.70	647	8.97	839	9.86	1,030	10.50
WA	966	16.34	1,227	17.02	1,488	17.48	1,749	17.83
Tas	329	5.57	334	4.63	339	3.98	344	3.50
NT	128	2.16	208	2.88	288	3.39	368	3.75
Total	5,911	100.00	7,211	100.00	8,511	100.00	9,811	100.00

Source: Commonwealth Schools Commission *Report for the Triennium 1982-84*, March 1981, Table 13.4, p.384.

SUMMARY

2.35 There are extensive provisions for the education of children in country areas. However, it must be recognised that the term 'country' or 'rural' in relation to education involves a significant problem of definition. The Commonwealth Schools Commission identified three groups of children embraced by the term:

> "A relatively small proportion of children are so isolated as to be unable to attend school while living at home. At the other extreme, large numbers of children are congregated in provincial cities. Other children live in settlements which are located at varying distances from a major centre."10

2.36 It is the first of these groups which is the major operational focus of the AIC Scheme. In spite of the attempts to provide for compensatory alternatives for advancing educational opportunities, the isolated child's alternatives are limited to two: correspondence tuition or living away from home.

2.37 The limited research evidence suggests that some educational disadvantage exists in all rural areas. In sparsely populated areas, the logistics and technical difficulties of delivering educational services to individual children, families,

10. Schools Commission *Report for the Triennium 1976-78*, June 1975. Canberra: AGPS, p.73.

or very small groups are major barriers to genuine equality of educational opportunity. The underlying assumption of the AIC Scheme is that students in sparsely-populated areas deserve to receive educational opportunities equal to those available to their town counterparts. It recognises that, in most cases, genuine equality does not exist. Correspondence tuition, by and large, cannot equal the educational opportunities offered in the ordinary school classroom. Boarding isolated children outside their own homes and communities to enable them to attend schools is often, at best, a stop-gap measure which may not be in the interests of the child or his family.

2.38 There is an important interface between services provided (usually by State Governments and private authorities) and financial support made available to parents of isolated children to enable them to equalise educational opportunities for their children. One should be closely correlated with the other. One purpose of this survey is to analyse the extent to which the benefits provided through the AIC Scheme, in conjunction with State-provided benefits, enable isolated children to obtain access to the services they need to achieve equality of educational opportunity. Incidentally, comment will be made on whether or not such services exist and on their perceived adequacy.

CHAPTER 3 EVALUATING THE AIC SCHEME

3.1 Evaluating the effectiveness of the AIC Scheme in enabling isolated children to obtain equality of educational opportunity with young people who live in Australia's towns and cities is complicated by several factors:

(i) While the original purpose of the scheme was to minimise the cost to parents of providing access to schools for their children, thereby advancing their educational opportunities, that purpose has been progressively modified. Decisions taken to expand the criteria of eligibility have shifted the focus of the scheme and more than one category of isolation is now provided for. The population embraced by the scheme is diverse. It is scattered throughout the continent. It caters for children living in the metropolican areas of capital cities, major and minor urban areas, small rural settlements, as well as those living in sparsely populated areas. They might reasonably represent the full range of social and economic characteristics of the general population. Their unifying feature is that their children do not have reasonable daily access to an appropriate school.

(ii) Educational services regarded as 'normal' vary among the States. Similarly, alternative facilities and services and compensatory programs differ markedly. Consequently, financial benefits to students have different educational values and outcomes according to the types of facilities and services to which they provide access.

(iii) The population in receipt of allowances is readily identifiable. Those who might otherwise qualify but, for whatever reason, are not in receipt of allowances, are difficult to locate. This proved to be one of the enduring problems of this review.

3.2 Given these problems, rather than compare the advancement of educational opportunities through the AIC Scheme with some real or hypothetical urban norms, the methodology adopted was to evaluate the scheme within its own environment. That is, to survey the perceptions of those who benefited from the scheme and to assess its advantages and disadvantages against the perceived needs of the target population. The review sought to answer four questions.

(i) *Who benefits from the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme?*
What are the characteristics of the families whose children qualify for the allowances? What are their social and economic characteristics (including sources

of income and occupations)? What is the location of their homes in relation to educational and related services and facilities?

(ii) *What use is made of the Assistance for Isolated Children Allowances?*
Where do the children go to school? Where do they board? Is living away from home preferred to correspondence? Are there significant relationships between disposable family income and the type of education chosen for the children?

(iii) *What effect does the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme appear to have had?*
Has it improved opportunities for isolated children to gain access to schools? Has it advanced the educational opportunities for special groups such as the handicapped or the talented? How useful are the benefits for students seen to be?

(iv) *What anomalies exist in relation to participants and benefits under the scheme?*
Are any groups in the target population disadvantaged by any aspects of the program? Should the allowances be means tested? Is the administration of the scheme efficient? How could the program be improved?

3.3 Information was gathered from two sources, a mailed questionnaire survey of a sample of families who had qualified for assistance in 1979 and 1980, and structured interviews with a smaller sample of parents who represented a cross-section of the target population. Initially the sample population was to be drawn from two States, Queensland and Western Australia. These two between them contained more than half of the students receiving assistance under the scheme.[1] Furthermore, given their geographic size and diversity, it was anticipated that they would provide examples of most instances of isolation affecting opportunities for education.

3.4 When data about numbers of children receiving assistance and geographic location by postcode were analysed for the selection of the project sample, an anomalous distribution was identified in the Sydney metropolitan area. The postal addresses of 513 beneficiaries under the scheme were within the metropolitan postal district. This represented about 12 per cent of the total AIC recipients in New South Wales and was a disproportionate number compared with that of the Brisbane metropolitan recipients (108 or approximately 2 per cent of the State total) and metropolitan Perth (195 or approximately

1. On 30 June 1980, 5315 students in Queensland (35.7 per cent of the national total of 14,899) and 3342 in Western Australia (22.4 per cent of the total) qualified for basic allowances of one kind or another (boarding, correspondence, second home, short term board, and pre-school correspondence).

6 per cent of the State total). One explanation was that more children in New South Wales than any other State were deriving assistance under the qualification of 'handicapped'. The numbers of children receiving assistance under that category are summarised in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1

NUMBER OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN RECEIVING ASSISTANCE, BY STATE, AS AT 30 JUNE 1980

	ACT	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	AUST.
Number	19	985	302	347	87	157	110	15	2,022
Per Cent	0.9	48.7	14.9	17.2	4.3	7.8	5.5	0.7	100.0

3.5 To test that assumption and to gather additional information about handicapped children in this scheme, a revised version of the questionnaire was administered to a sample of families in metropolitan Perth and Sydney. Structured interviews of a sample of parents in the two capitals were also undertaken.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE

3.6 Questionnaires were distributed to a total of 3,732 recipients of AIC allowances. Three versions were prepared. Marginal variations in the forms distributed in Queensland and Western Australia allowed for differences of nomenclature and the organisational structure of schooling in the two States. The form distributed in metropolitan Perth and Sydney was revised by deleting questions about distance from schools and services and by including additional questions relating to handicapped children.

3.7 The four basic questions interfacing the survey (listed in paragraph 3.2 above) defined the boundaries of the survey. The intention was to gather information which enabled description of some characteristics of families qualifying for AIC allowances; an analysis of educational opportunities taken up and the consequent costs incurred; and some assessment of the perceived advantages and anomalies of the scheme. To these ends, the questionnaires were distributed to half of the families in Western Australia and Queensland who were registered with the Commonwealth Department of Education as qualifying for AIC allowances in 1979 and 1980, and whose postal addresses were outside the Perth and Brisbane metropolitan postal districts. These groups were deemed to be 'rural dwellers' and their places of residence were scattered throughout the two States.

3.8 In the case of the Sydney and Perth metropolitan addresses, the sample chosen were those who had qualified for allowances in 1979 and 1980, and whose postal addresses registered with the Department had not changed. In the event the 348 recipients in Sydney represented 69.2 per cent of the total AIC beneficiaries in the Sydney metropolitan area for 1980, and the 70 in Perth represented 35.9 per cent of the total for that city in the same year.

3.9 Response rates for completed questionnaires are summarised in Table 3.2. Given the logistical problems of access to the population living in remote areas, and the itinerant nature of many families, the country response was considered to be satisfactory

TABLE 3.2

THE SAMPLE SIZE AND RESPONSE RATE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

		Number	Per Cent
Form A:	Western Australia		
	Despatched	1430	100.0
	R.T.S.(a)	64	4.5
	No Response	504	35.2
	Response	862	60.3
Form A:	Queensland		
	Despatched	1884	100.0
	R.T.S.	72	3.8
	No Response	581	30.9
	Response	1231	65.3
Form B:	Metropolitan Perth/Sydney		
	Despatched	418	100.0
	R.T.S.	15	3.6
	No Response	160	38.2
	Response	243	58.1

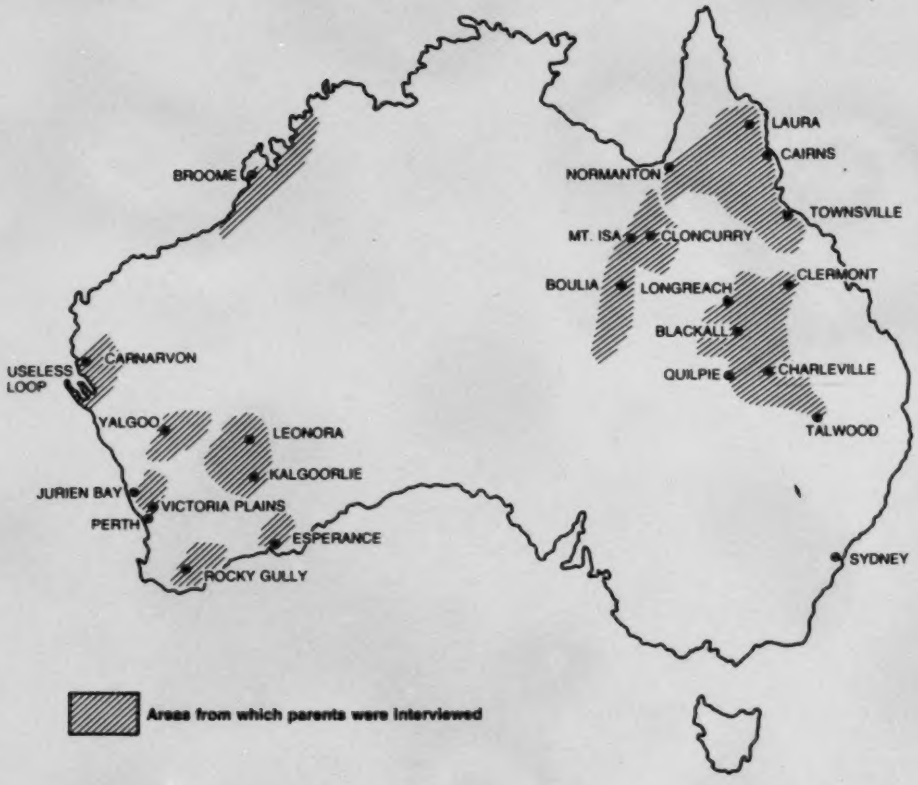
Note (a) R.T.S. = Return to Sender: Mail returned unopened by Australia Post as 'address unknown'

3.10 In Queensland, the 1231 families who completed and returned the questionnaire had a total of 3957 children, of whom 2992 (76 per cent) were at school. This was a larger proportion than for Western Australia. In that State, 862 families of the sample had a total of 2935 children, of whom 1718 (59 per cent) were at school. They were distributed across all years of schooling, but in Western Australia the largest numbers were in the senior secondary years (11 and 12) whereas in Queensland they were in Years 7 to 10. There was also a significantly higher proportion of children in lower primary grades in Queensland than in Western Australia.

THE INTERVIEW PROGRAM

3.11 The parents of 313 families were interviewed directly and a further 64 families were represented in small group discussions with members of the research team. Figure 3.1 details the regional centres of the districts in which the families lived. One hundred and seventy-four interviews were conducted in Queensland, 114 in rural Western Australia, 19 in the Perth metropolitan area, and 6 in metropolitan Sydney.

FIGURE 3.1 REGIONAL CENTRES OF INTERVIEW PROGRAM



3.12 An interview schedule was adopted which sought comprehensive data on the views of parents and others about aspects of educational choice, disadvantage, attendant costs and their impact upon standards of living, the importance of financial assistance from Commonwealth and State sources in meeting educational needs, perceived anomalies in the AIC scheme, and so on. Many variables affected those perceptions. Furthermore, many of the issues involved value judgements about quality of life, the quality of education, the importance of after-school care, and public versus private responsibility for advancing the educational opportunities of children. Therefore, the interviews were minimally structured to encourage participating parents and others to give full and open expression to their opinions. The data from questionnaire and interview were complementary.

3.13 The following chapters present the combined quantitative and qualitative review of the AIC Scheme. It is arranged in three sections which focus on the central questions of the research. Chapter 4 provides a description of some of the social and economic characteristics of families in the survey; chapter 5 reviews educational choice and the costs to parents; chapter 6 evaluates the AIC Scheme and makes recommendations for its improvement. Because the problems of handicapped children are unique and diverse, a separate chapter is devoted to them.

CHAPTER 4 CHARACTERISTICS OF AIC SCHEME FAMILIES

4.1 A characteristic of the distribution of population in Australia is the dominance of the capital cities. Rural areas generally are sparsely populated, pastoral regions more so than the agricultural districts. In Tasmania, less than half of the State population is to be found in Hobart, but elsewhere the profile is one of concentration rather than dispersal. Patterns of population growth and internal migration in the past decade indicate no weakening of that trend. (See Figure 4.1). Maximum growth is still occurring in the major urban centres.

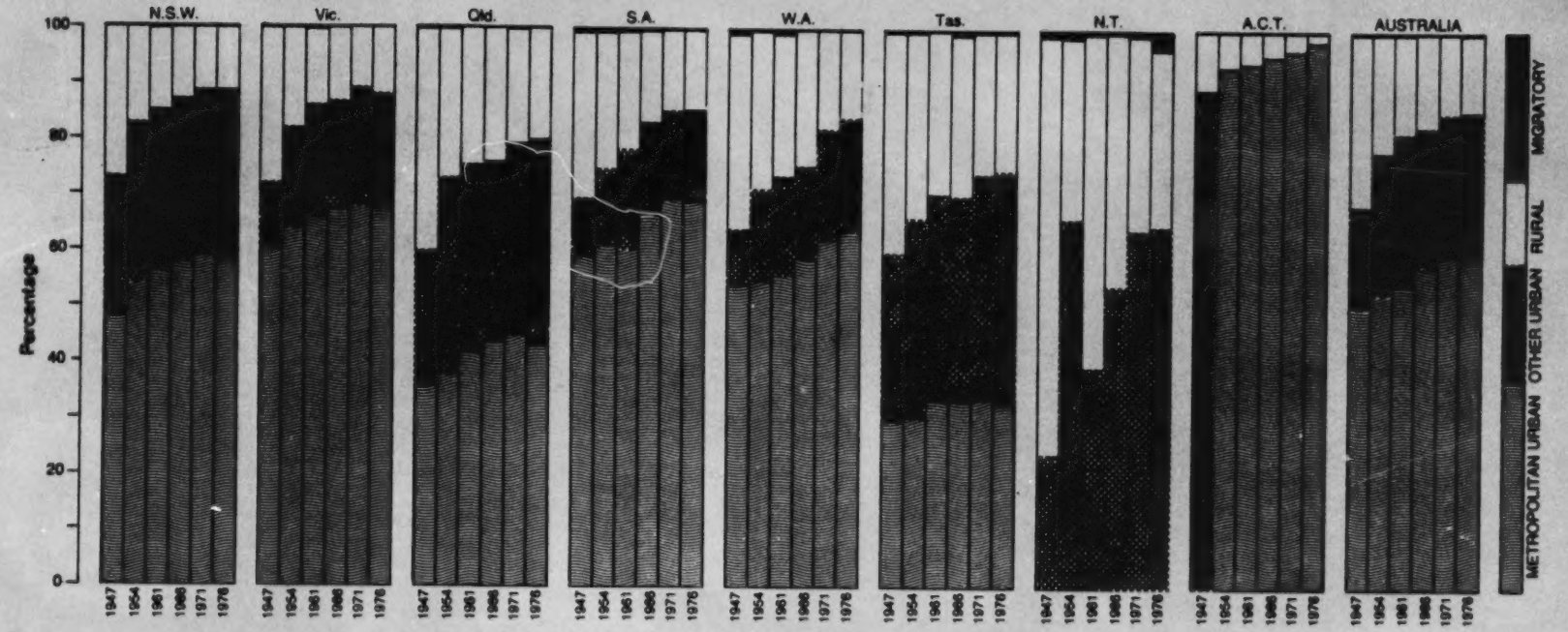
4.2 Recent economic development and demographic trends in rural areas have been characterised by the creation of remote new towns where mineral resources development has occurred, the consolidation of rural holdings in many districts with consequent displacement of former family-owners and farm workers, and the opening-up of marginal agricultural areas in some States with subsequent establishment of small service centres. These shifts in the rural population have been accompanied by the displacement of the workforce because of mechanisation and disproportionate accumulation of costs over farm incomes. There has been a trend for a drift of population away from the country toward larger urban centres.

4.3 Families living in rural areas generally reflect the full range of social characteristics of the total Australian population although different occupational groups predominate and the cultural mix varies from urban areas. The purpose of this chapter is to describe some of the characteristics and circumstances of those who benefit from the AIC Scheme and to comment upon relevant educational implications.

4.4 The quantitative data are derived from the questionnaire survey of families receiving AIC benefits and the interviews conducted. More detailed tables are contained in the Appendix to this report. Where pertinent, the statistical data are supported with illustrations drawn from the interviews. The variables considered are those of the questionnaire, namely:

- Grounds for assistance
- Family structure, including number and age distribution of children
- Type of family home and length of residence
- Frequency of mail deliveries and location of family home with respect to various services (including educational)
- Category of employment and type of industry in which parents (or guardian) were employed, and taxable incomes of parents (or guardian) for the financial years 1976-1977, 1977-1978 and 1978-1979 respectively.

FIGURE 4.1 DISTRIBUTION OF METROPOLITAN URBAN, NON-METROPOLITAN URBAN, RURAL AND MIGRATORY POPULATIONS OF AUSTRALIA, 1947-1976



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Sources: CBCS, 1947, 1954, 1961, 1966 and 1971 Censuses of Population and Housing:
ABS, 1976 Census of Population and Housing

Figure 4.1 courtesy of Professor W.D. Borrie, 1981.

Grounds for Assistance

4.5 The range of conditions which qualify an applicant to receive benefits from the AIC Scheme are enumerated on the first page of the questionnaire schedule (see Appendix A). It should be noted that many applicants are eligible for assistance on several grounds. In the Western Australian survey, some 31 per cent of respondents qualified for assistance by satisfying two or more of the criteria of eligibility. In Queensland, this figure was 41 per cent. By far the most common single condition of eligibility in both States was the basic distance qualification; that is, the family home is more than 4.5 kilometres from the nearest transport service and more than 16 kilometres from the nearest appropriate government school. In other words, the majority of AIC recipients in country areas are isolated in terms of both access to appropriate educational facilities and the availability of transport services. (See Table 4.1)

4.6 While the relative importance of the remaining grounds for eligibility shows some variation between the two States, other recipients are generally covered by the following circumstances:

(i) undertaking a course of studies not available at the local school,

(ii) family home is frequently isolated during bad weather by impassable roads,

(iii) family home is within 4,5 kilometres of the nearest transport service, but more than 56 kilometres from the nearest appropriate government school, and

(iv) travel to and from school by available transport would take at least three hours each day.

4.7 The unavailability of appropriate courses of study was the second most important qualification for boarding allowances in Western Australia. Schools in many rural areas cater for primary, but not secondary education. In some cases, where secondary education is available, it proceeds only to Year 10. Thus, to complete senior secondary studies, it is necessary for students to live away from home. In some instances, a child who has been identified as having an outstanding talent for which a special educational program is available at a government school distant from his or her home, or a child who requires specialist remedial assistance, may also qualify for allowances, but few of these identified themselves in the survey.

4.8 In Queensland, the second largest group of respondents were those affected by bad weather and impassable roads. The problems of cyclonic and monsoonal weather, and associated flooding are particular problems in the northern and western regions of that State. Even for those children who qualify for

TABLE 4.1

GROUNDS UNDER WHICH CHILD/CHILDREN QUALITY FOR ASSISTANCE UNDER AIC

Grounds for Assistance	WA No.	Qld No.
1. Family home more than 4.5 km from nearest transport service and more than 16 km from nearest appropriate government school.	604	977
2. Family within 4.5 km of nearest transport service but more than 56 km from nearest appropriate government school.	174	117
3. Travel to and from school by available transport would take at least 3 hours a day.	135	239
4. Family home is frequently isolated during bad weather by impassable roads.	42	322
5. Child is handicapped and must live away from home and attend a special institution.	41	93
6. Child is handicapped and studies at home by correspondence.	3	13
7. Child is undertaking a course of studies not available at the local school.	196	138
8. Family moves frequently for employment purposes to widely scattered locations.	21	23
9. Family moved to a new home during the school year and child lived away from home to continue at the same school.	8	8
10. Other (including pre-school in Queensland)	20	99
	1244	2029

Notes: Percentages have not been calculated because of the large number of multiple responses. The sample sizes for Western Australia and Queensland are 862, 1231 respectively.

assistance on these grounds, holidays at home are sometimes shortened or curtailed due to the severity of weather conditions.

4.9 Although the main qualification for eligibility for AIC allowances in country areas is clearly isolation in terms of distance from an appropriate government school, access to school or services is not merely a question of distance. Climatic conditions and physical barriers affecting access are often the more trying. In this context, apart from problems associated with being cut off for part of the year from mail or road transport to a school, a major problem alluded to by many parents is the poor condition of roads and high temperatures which make school bus services a physically exhausting experience for a number of children attending school on a daily basis.

Family Structure

4.10 In both the Western Australian and Queensland surveys, 93 per cent of children surveyed came from two-parent families, This is marginally higher than the general population in each State, namely 91.3 and 91.1 per cent respectively.[1] Correspondingly, the prevalence of single-parent families is significantly less among AIC respondents than it is for their respective State populations. Between 4.6 and 6 per cent of families in each of the States described themselves as 'one parent'. Yet for Western Australia as a whole, 8.5 per cent of families fall into this category, and for Queensland 8.9 per cent. It is also noteworthy that of the single-parent families identified in the survey, 31 per cent of those in Western Australia and 34 per cent in Queensland were headed by a male. This compares with 13 and 15 per cent in the respective State populations. Thus, while there was less evidence of the single-parent family unit in the sample, where it does exist it is more likely to be headed by a male than is a similar unit in the general population.[2]

4.11 In the Western Australian sample, the 862 families had a combined total of 2,935 children, an average of 3.4 children per family.[3] Table 4.2 indicates that nearly three-quarters of these children had either left school or were receiving their secondary education. This fact, combined with the very low percentage of pre-schoolers amongst Western Australian AIC families, provides some evidence of an ageing rural population in that State. This might be a consequence of the general population drift from rural areas, or, it may reflect a phase in the cyclic distribution of generations in the rural population.

1. *General Social Survey of Australian Families 1975*, A,B,S, Catalogue No. 4107, p.15.
2. While one may only speculate as to the reasons for these differing patterns, the location of the farming family's home with the father's work place may in fact make it less likely that he leaves his family than his urban counterpart.
3. It should be noted that in both the Western Australian and Queensland surveys the total number of children is slightly under-represented. This is because in the few instances where families had more than six children, these extra children were not included in the analysis.

4.12 This pattern was not reflected among Queensland respondents. While the average of 3.25 children per family corresponds strongly with that of Western Australia, the age distribution of children suggests that in rural Queensland the population is younger. Table 4.2 and Figure 4.2 indicate that in that State there were proportionately four times as many pre-school aged children amongst Queensland AIC families and nearly 10 per cent more primary school children than in Western Australia. Correspondingly, the Queensland families had fewer children at secondary school or who had completed their education.

FIGURE 4.2 DISTRIBUTION OF OFFSPRING BY AGE: QUEENSLAND AND WESTERN AUSTRALIA

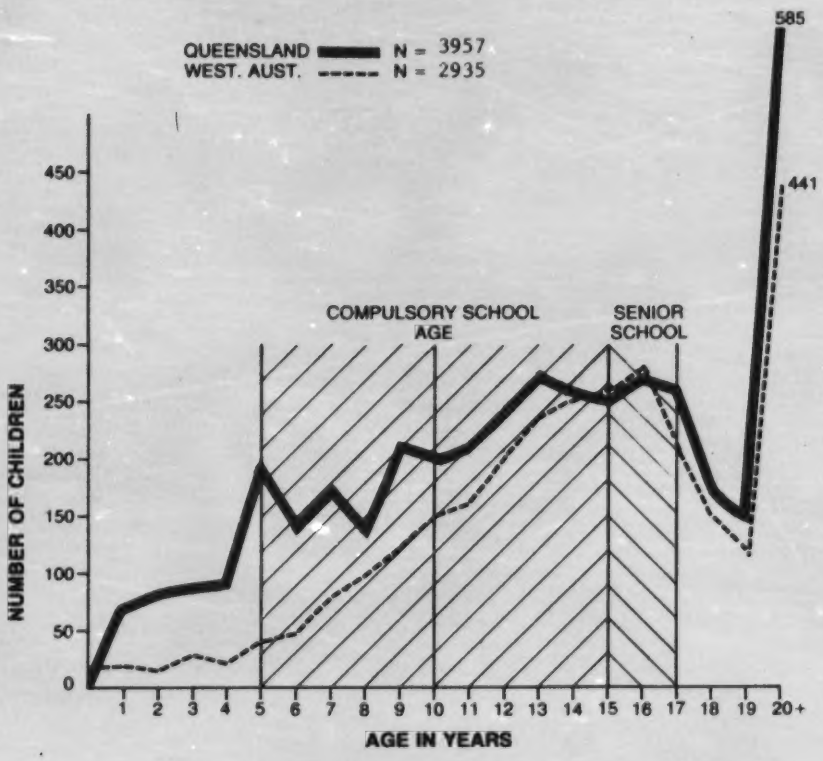

TABLE 4.2

A COMPARISON OF THE EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN OF AIC FAMILIES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND QUEENSLAND

Educational Level	Western Australia		Queensland	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
Pre-school (0-5 years)	88	3.0	474	11.9
Years 1-7 (primary)	659	22.5	1288	32.6
Years 8-12 (secondary)	1083	36.9	1173	29.7
Upgraded	27	1.0	57	1.4
Left School	1078	36.6	965	24.4
Total no. of children	2935	100.0	3957	100.0

4.13 This apparent difference between the Western Australian and Queensland AIC families notwithstanding, about 60 per cent of the children in the sample in both States were enrolled at primary or secondary schools. Consequently, many families were experiencing or anticipating the financial consequences of sending one or more children away from home for their education.

Type of Family Home and Length of Residence

4.14 Over 90 per cent of respondents in both States described their family home as a 'house' or 'flat'. Other types of accommodation included workers' quarters (3.4 per cent), hostels, motels and caravans. This information does not reveal the considerable variation in conditions of accommodation which qualified for the title 'house'.

4.15 The interviews showed the extent of the variation. For those families conducting correspondence lessons conditions were often far from ideal. Descriptions were given of a very wide range of home circumstances for correspondence children. These included rough bush dwellings, transient accommodation in work camps, and in many instances places which had inefficient or limited power supplies. There were too, of course, well established homesteads, well-equipped mining 'camps' and workers' 'quarters' in which correspondence schooling might be very adequately housed. The following statement on the location and housing situation of a Queensland family illustrates the difficulties faced by many in isolated areas of Australia:

> "Unstocked country, minimum improvement, a tin corrugated iron hut with doubtful weather proofing standards and everything else. What we're doing now is actually under worse conditions to what people probably struck seventy or eighty years ago when they

were becoming established. The whole economic background is that all family members have to work, right down to the youngest, the same as years ago when other people were starting off from scratch ... Until we become established, there's no way that we can see the situation changing .... We'll get the place fairly well established first, then we'll think about putting a house there .... I'd hate to put a house there and have a drought come through and have to walk off and leave it ... it's all dry country and we've got to put bores down to develop all the time. Those of the children who were old enough to understand what was going on were 100 per cent for it - so, as we told you, there's no one going to boarding schools. It's correspondence."

4.16 Despite the difficult living conditions of many isolated families, the evidence of the survey indicated stability of population in terms of length of residence at the current address. Fifty-seven per cent of the Western Australian respondents had been resident there for more than 10 years (see Table 4.3). In contrast, only 6 per cent of families indicated a move to their address within the previous year.[4] This stability was less apparent among the Queensland families. Table 4.3 indicates a more mobile population of AIC beneficiaries in that State. Only 39 per cent of families were resident at their present address for more than 10 years and just over 16 per cent had moved to their address within the year

TABLE 4.3

LENGTH OF RESIDENCE AT PRESENT ADDRESS

Length of Residence	Western Australia No. of Families	%	Queensland No. of Families	%
Less than 1 year	54	6.3	203	16.5
1 - 5 years	181	21.0	292	23.7
6 - 10 years	127	14.7	242	19.7
More than 10 years	495	57.4	480	39.0
No response	5	0.6	14	1.1
Total	862	100.0	1231	100.0

4. It is suspected that at least some of the questionnaires which were 'returned to sender' were posted to families who had moved and to whose current address the researchers did not have access.

4.17 Among Western Australian respondents, a comparison of length of residence with employment type revealed that the primary producing sector was the most stable occupational group. Thus, 67 per cent of men employed in 'agriculture, forestry, fishing or hunting' had been resident at the same address for more than 10 years. Only 6 per cent of those so employed had moved to their address within the previous year. This compares with the mining population where the most common length of residence was between two and five years. The Queensland data revealed a greater mobility among the primary producing sector in that State than in Western Australia. By comparison with other occupational categories however, it must still be considered very stable. (See Table 4, Appendix B).

Frequency of Mail Deliveries and Location of Family Home with Respect to Various Services

4.18 One means of measuring the relative isolation of AIC recipients is to consider their degree of access to various 'essential' services. Tables 4.4A and 4.4B identify the frequency of mail deliveries and the recipients' location with respect to the nearest business centre, passenger transport service and government and non-government schools.

Table 4.4A

FREQUENCY OF MAIL DELIVERIES

Frequency	Western Australia		Queensland	
	No. of Families	%	No. of Families	%
Every weekday	308	35.7	252	20.5
Two or three times a week	386	44.8	533	43.2
Once a week	73	8.5	366	29.7
Once a fortnight	16	1.9	16	1.3
Once a month	1	0.1	2	0.2
Less than once a month	0	0.0	2	0.2
No regular mail service	73	8.5	56	4.5
No response	5	0.5	4	0.4
Total	862	100.0	1231	100.0

TABLE 4.4B

DISTANCE BETWEEN FAMILY RESIDENCE AND NEAREST BUSINESS CENTRE, NEAREST SCHEDULED PASSENGER SERVICE, GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT PRIMARY SCHOOL, GOVERNMENT DISTRICT AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND NON-GOVERNMENT HIGH SCHOOL, (IN PERCENTAGES)

Distance between family residence and ... (in kilometres)	Business Centre	Passenger Service	Govt Primary	Non-govt Primary	Govt District High	Govt Senior High School	Non-govt High
Queensland							
Less than 5	19.8	11.8	21.4	9.9	6.1	2.5	1.6
5 - 25	17.8	13.0	25.9	12.2	8.7	4.8	2.2
26 - 50	18.4	16.3	19.2	15.6	12.5	8.9	4.5
51 - 100	25.8	28.6	19.2	25.8	26.4	19.0	10.2
More than 100	17.5	29.5	12.5	30.5	35.6	46.2	52.4
No response	0.7	0.8	1.8	6.0	10.7	18.6	29.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Western Australia							
Less than 5	18.7	20.4	29.7	5.9	14.7	3.6	1.7
5 - 25	29.7	26.4	38.9	4.6	12.9	2.7	2.8
26 - 50	18.4	19.1	16.1	7.2	19.5	8.2	2.9
51 - 100	13.7	15.1	4.2	15.4	23.2	32.6	9.0
More than 100	18.7	14.8	6.3	35.7	19.0	41.2	54.2
No response	0.8	4.2	4.8	31.2	10.7	11.7	29.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

4.19 Over 60 per cent and 80 per cent of respondents in Western Australia and Queensland respectively did not have access to a daily mail service. In Western Australia, while most of these families received mail two or three times a week, nearly 9 per cent stated that they did not have any access to any regular mail delivery service. In Queensland, more families who returned the questionnaire had access to a weekly service and fewer appeared to be inconvenienced by the lack of regular mail delivery.

4.20 The educational implications of an infrequent mail delivery service are significant. Lack of mail service may render the receipt of correspondence lessons impractical, or if undertaken, result in long delays between the completion and marking of work. This problem was exemplified by a woman from a fishing family in Queensland:

> I live in an itinerant situation .... I'm not like someone who lives on the end of a weekly mail plane. A lot depends on how well we're catching. If we're in some river ... I may not collect that mail for a month. It just sits there waiting for me. With the lower grades, by the time you collect it, it's eight weeks after they've sent it in. What I do now is be a school teacher on the boat. I consider myself to be fairly experienced now, I'm not qualified, but I just correct all mistakes as they're made. Eight weeks later they don't mean a thing to the child. What matters is what he's doing now.

4.21 While this family illustrates one aspect of access to regular mail services, there are many people for whom regular mail services are interrupted by weather. These problems heighten the difficulties of isolation from normal school services. Because of delays in the return of marked material, continuity of lessons is often impractical.

4.22 The distance between the family home and closest business centre and transport service was highly variable in both Western Australia and Queensland. It is apparent from Table 4.4B however, that fewer Queensland families lived within 50 kilometres of these services.

4.23 Further evidence of the greater isolation of Queensland families is provided when access to schooling is considered. It can be seen from Table 4.4B that in Western Australia, 85 per cent of families lived within 50 kilometres of a government primary school. In Queensland, this figure was 66 per cent. Again, nearly half of the Western Australian families lived within 50 kilometres of a government district high school, yet this was true of only one quarter of the Queensland families. The increased isolation observed among Queensland AIC recipients has a bearing upon transport costs. The need for more substantial assistance with transport costs was the most strongly expressed priority of Queensland parents. It was

regarded by most as an area requiring urgent policy review by the Queensland Government.

4.24 When senior high school education is considered, it becomes clear that this is the most notable area of disadvantage suffered by families in both States. Only between 14 and 16 per cent of the respondent families lived within 50 kilometres of such government school facilities. Yet in both States, between 36 and 40 per cent of children receiving their secondary education were in their senior years. Inevitably, the majority of these students were required to live away from home since the only alternative was matriculation studies by correspondence. This, even when it is available, is generally considered to be a limited and unsatisfactory alternative.

4.25 It can be observed from Table 4.4B that very few families had daily access to non-government schooling, as would be expected in isolated areas. It should be noted that the no-response rate to these questions was very high. This suggests that for many families the locality of nearest non-government schools is not known.

4.26 It was concluded that the problem of access to schooling is particularly acute in the senior secondary years where almost all children are forced to live away from home. While it is apparent that more children have access to primary and junior high school facilities, especially in Western Australia, it must be remembered that attendance is also dependent upon a transport network which services these facilities. Climatic factors and the condition of roads have important bearing upon access to schooling, even if in normal times the distance to be travelled might not be considered excessive.

Category of Employment and Type of Industry

4.27 In both Western Australia and Queensland, the 'self-employed' category accounted for the greatest number of male and female workers. Seventy-one per cent of the men in Western Australia and 51 per cent of the women so categorised their employment, with the Queensland figures being slightly lower at 62 and 42 per cent respectively. The abnormally high female component of this occupational category suggests that many of those who described themselves as self-employed, operated partnerships with their spouses. This is relevant to farmers and pastoralists in particular who, as Table 4.5B indicates, constituted the largest sector of the work force in the sample. Seventy-four per cent of men in Western Australia and 80 per cent in Queensland described their field of employment as 'agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting'. While not all of those so employed could be nominated as farmers or pastoralists the majority are in this category. Wage and salary earners constituted only 25 per cent of the Western Australian respondents, but nearly 36 per cent of those in Queensland. Greater decentralisation and younger families in Queensland may account for this.

TABLE 4.5A

CATEGORY OF EMPLOYMENT (IN PERCENTAGES)

Employment	Western Australia		Queensland	
	Father/Male Guardian	Mother/Female Guardian	Father/Male Guardian	Mother/Female Guardian
Wage or salary earner	24.9	17.1	35.7	12.6
Self-employed	71.5	51.5	62.3	42.5
Pensioner	1.9	1.8	1.2	3.0
Currently employed	0.7	1.7	0.7	1.9
Other	0.3	2.4	0.1	1.2
Home duties	0	22.9	0	36.0
No response	0.7	2.6	0	2.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

TABLE 4.5B

TYPE OF INDUSTRY IN WHICH PARENT/GUARDIAN IS USUALLY EMPLOYED (IN PERCENTAGES)

Type of Industry	Western Australia		Queensland	
	Father/Male Guardian	Mother/Female Guardian	Father/Male Guardian	Mother/Female Guardian
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting	80.0	44.3	74.0	48.1
Mining	3.4	0.9	6.7	1.3
Manufacturing	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.0
Electricity, gas, water	0.5	0.1	1.6	0.0
Construction	2.2	0.0	2.4	0.2
Wholesale, retail	1.4	1.6	3.0	4.2
Transport, storage	2.6	0.2	2.2	1.3
Communication	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.2
Finance, insurance etc.	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.7
Public administration	1.0	0.6	0.8	0.3
Community services	2.8	5.8	1.9	10.5
Entertainment, restaurant	0.8	1.8	1.2	2.5
Other	2.5	2.3	3.0	3.0
Home duties	0.1	35.8	0.0	23.2
No response	0.9	4.9	1.4	4.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

4.28 In view of the importance of mothers in the formal education process for children in isolation, it is interesting to note the level of participation of women in the rural work-force. The survey data suggest that apart from business partnerships, very few women are employed in other occupational categories. It is an established fact in Australia that employment opportunities for women in country areas are extremely limited. Comments were also made by parents that it is not always in the best interests of women to seek part-time work because of the AIC means test upon additional and supple-mentary allowances. Hypothetically, a woman who seeks employment may have two children in receipt of the full AIC allowances. When her part-time income is combined with that of her spouse, the total family income may exceed the Marginal Adjusted Family Income to qualify for additional and supplementary assistance. Thus, in practice, her first $1,500 to $2,000 in earnings may simply offset this loss, and only then may she start to contribute to the family income (which, in most cases, is used substantially to support the children's education).

4.29 In cases where husbands had formed business partnerships with their wives, it was observed that these were rarely in name only. Interviews with wives of primary producers, in particular, revealed that many of them assumed duties additional to those of mother and home maker. These duties, which might include the full range of tasks on a sheep or cattle station which in former days would have been carried out by hired hands, impact heavily on the capacity of a mother to cope with corres-pondence supervision. Of course, these pressures on isolated women are not confined to the wives of pastoralists or farmers. Women in many physically and emotionally demanding isolated situations must learn to cope with the educational needs of their children. The following example from an interview with a fisherman's wife, illustrates the pressure upon the mother-teacher in correspondence education.

> A typical day mackerel fishing ... the 'silly season' I call it. It lasts for two months, could be four months ... We get up at 4.00am, have coffee and he would rush around making sure that the Dory was pumped out, that his lines were right, that his wogs were right, ... all this tremendous panic from 4.00am till 4.30am. He has his cup of coffee - the children are still asleep downstairs. One son wakes up - he has in fact taken to sleeping on the deck because he can't wake up at that hour of the morning in his bunk - he sleeps on deck in the dew, so when he's gone, what I do is hang all his bed clothes out because they're soaking wet with dew. They go out in the dory and I sit there with my coffee and cigarettes and then, because I know that they're going to come in with a whole lot of fish and I've got to help fillet them, then I do my 'house-work' if you like. On a boat with limited space, you've got to keep everything clean - by 7.00am I've finished the day's work and then I go down and I wake

the two little kids up ... one is 12 and the other is 7 ... get them their breakfast, and I start the younger one's school-work as early as I can in the mackerel season - if I can, I start him at 7 o'clock - he has his School of the Air at 9.30am. At this time of the year, his school work has to be finished by 10 o'clock - because the men come with the Dory and we've got eighty odd fish to clean which takes until 1 o'clock.

4.30 A wife's labour is often the only means of running a business in times of economic downturn in the rural sector, Pressure upon her is likely to be most acute during those times. For some isolated women the competing demands of being a mother, wife, cook, teacher, labourer and so on, at times become intolerable. For many mothers, these demands upon time and services extend over several years, as instanced by this mother of seven children:

Q. Most mothers have indicated that their most difficult year is year one, because it is demanding in terms of time.

A. Oh yes! But you can cope in the sense that the relationship between mother and child ... you come to that critical year seven, where the child is maturing as an adult, wanting independence ... it's just there, you've been in each other's company too long. They have managed to cope with you for all those years and you've probably managed to cope with them - you know, there were times when you had to part and not look at each other for half a day ... that's my experience, I don't know about anyone else ... it's very demanding on time as well, it's hard in that respect.

Q. You said you had four on correspondence plus four pre-schoolers ... how did you organise your time?

A. Well, I was younger then and I had more physical stamina. I couldn't do it now. I mean then I would start my washing at 9 o'clock at night and I'd go to bed at 2.00am and get up when the baby needed her first feed - 6.00am type of thing. I was a working robot I suppose.

Q. What was the effect upon you - physically, mentally, emotionally?

Husband: In those days she just wanted to cope.

A. I have four teenagers now - now I have all the drain of four teenagers - you give me four babies any day, I still have a family of nine, I still have to clothe them, mend for them.

Husband: It's still a lot better though, as you say.

A. You only live a day at a time, you never think a day ahead and you mustn't think behind.

Q. How often do you have a holiday?

A. I don't. I used to have a holiday when I had ten days in hospital with the babies - I've been missing out and I'm lacking because of it.

Financial Circumstances of Families

4.31 In the survey, respondents were asked to state their taxable incomes for the financial years 1976-77, 1977-78 and 1978-79. Taxable income was defined as, "total assessable income from all sources less deductions for expenses incurred in gaining assessable income, investment allowances, and other deductions approved by the Commissioner of Taxation. That is, income upon which tax was payable."

4.32 As Tables 4.6A and 4.6B indicate, the response to this question was generally satisfactory. The non-response level for males ranged between 10 and 13 per cent and was only slightly higher than that recorded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in its 1976 population census.

4.33 Tables 4.6A and 4.6B indicate that a high percentage of respondents in both States had relatively low incomes. In Western Australia between 30 and 40 per cent of male respondents reported taxable incomes of below $5,000 in the three financial years between 1976 and 1979. The Queensland figures suggest a greater income fluctuation with between 24 and 44 per cent of incomes of male respondents falling below $5,000. It is also notable in Tables 4.6A and 4.6B that between 10 and 18 per cent of males reported that they had no taxable income. Because nearly 70 per cent of respondents were engaged in primary industries, it must be assumed that the effects of the rural recession are reflected in these data.

4.34 Lenahan *et. al.* recommended some caution in drawing conclusions from reported rural taxable incomes. Their study of isolated Queensland families in 1977 also demonstrated relatively low disposable incomes among their respondents. They noted however, that "... as many of the families in the survey were property or business owners, they probably benefited from deductions to total income which were not available to wage and salary earners ... any comparison between the taxable incomes of families in this survey with the Queensland population may tend to understate the income of the survey families".[5]

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5. See Lenahan, *et. al. op. cit.* page 38.

TABLE 4.6A

TAXABLE INCOME FOR AIC PARENTS - 1976-77, 1977-78, 1978-79

Taxable Income	1976-77 (percent) Father/Male Guardian	1976-77 (percent) Mother/Female Guardian	1977-78 (percent) Father/Male Guardian	1977-78 (percent) Mother/Female Guardian	1978-79 (percent) Father/Male Guardian	1978-79 (percent) Mother/Female Guardian
Western Australia						
No taxable income	12.5	21.2	17.1	23.6	15.4	21.6
$1 to $ 4,999	14.9	18.6	17.8	22.0	12.7	18.2
$ 5,000 to $ 9,999	26.2	15.1	23.5	15.5	26.1	20.1
$10,000 to $14,999	16.6	8.9	15.2	7.3	15.3	8.9
$15,000 to $19,999	9.3	3.8	7.2	2.1	9.2	3.0
$20,000 and over	7.3	3.7	6.8	2.5	9.9	3.6
No response	13.2	28.7	12.4	27.0	11.4	24.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: N for father/male guardian population = 829, N for mother/female guardian population = 847
Difference in N's due to fact that apart from the two parent families, there are 33 supporting mothers in the sample and only 15 supporting fathers.

Queensland						
No taxable income	18.2	33.2	16.3	29.9	10.4	26.1
$ 1 to $ 4,999	20.9	19.3	17.5	20.2	11.4	15.2
$ 5,000 to $ 9,999	30.2	9.9	31.5	12.1	29.8	14.1
$10,000 to $14,999	11.8	3.6	14.7	4.1	19.6	6.3
$15,000 to $19,999	4.7	1.3	4.9	1.0	10.0	3.9
$20,000 and over	2.7	0.7	3.7	1.2	9.1	4.3
No response	11.5	32.0	11.4	31.5	9.7	30.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Note: N for father/male guardian population = 1183
N for mother/female guardian population = 1206

TABLE 4.6B

AIC RESPONDENTS: WESTERN AUSTRALIA
TAXABLE INCOME OF MALES BY GRADE OF TAXABLE INCOME

Grade of Net Income	1976-77 Individuals	1976-77 Percent	1977-78 Individuals	1977-78 Percent	1978-79 Individuals	1978-79 Percent
Under $5,000	228	31.7	288	39.6	233	31.7
$5,000 to $9,999	216	29.4	195	26.9	216	30.0
$10,000 to $14,999	138	17.3	126	17.4	127	19.2
$15,000 to $19,999	76	10.5	60	8.3	77	10.6
$20,000 and over	61	11.2	57	7.9	82	8.5
Total	719	100.0	726	100.0	735	100.0

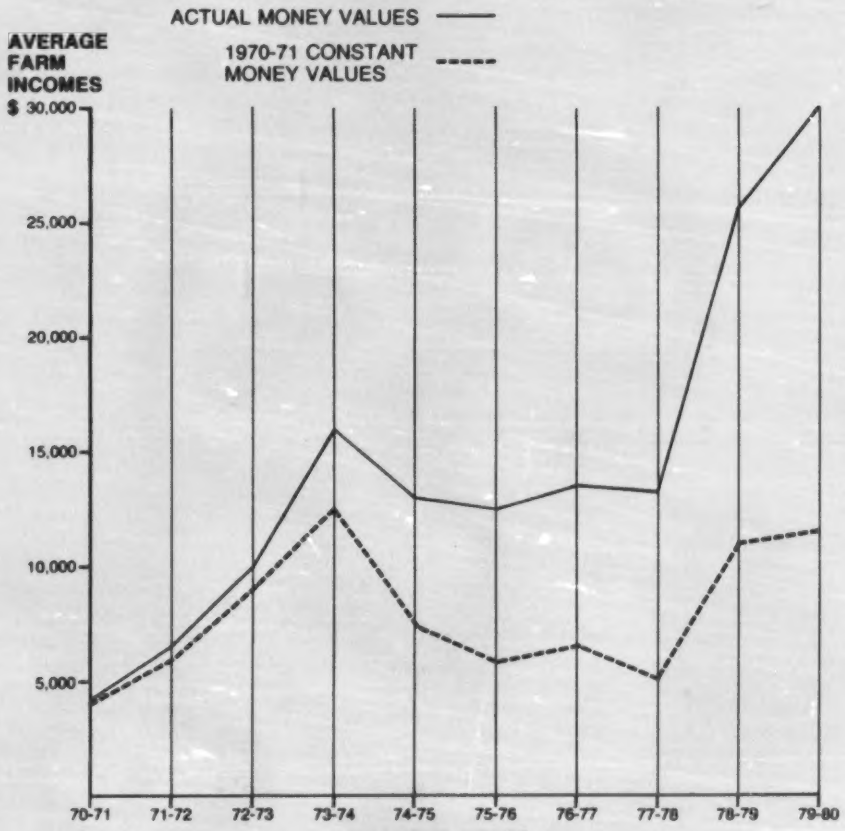
AIC RESPONDENTS: QUEENSLAND
TAXABLE INCOME OF MALES BY GRADE OF TAXABLE INCOME

Grade of Net Income	1976-77 Individuals	1976-77 Percent	1977-78 Individuals	1977-78 Percent	1978-79 Individuals	1978-79 Percent
Under $5,000	463	44.2	402	38.3	258	24.2
$5,000 to $9,999	357	34.1	371	35.4	351	32.9
$10,000 to $14,999	140	13.4	174	16.6	232	21.7
$15,000 to $19,999	55	5.3	58	5.5	119	11.1
$20,000 and over	32	3.0	44	4.2	108	10.1
Total	1047	100.0	1049	100.0	1068	100.0

4.35 They also noted that because rural incomes are subject to sharp fluctuations, a clearer picture of the rural economy can only be established by observing incomes over an extended period of time. These difficulties are relevant to the interpretation of income data gathered in this survey. Even so, the details provided for the three financial years, do enable some understanding of trends in the rural economy as they affected AIC recipients. (See Table 5 Appendix B,) They emphasise the generally low level of disposable family incomes.

4.36 While it is important to observe some reservations about these reported incomes, the evidence of the survey data is supported by information about rural incomes from other sources. The rural economy in Australia underwent a recession in the latter half of the seventies. It was complicated by the same inflationary pressures as those acting on the general economy, but in the rural sector the unique effects of seasonal conditions, the volume of production, and internal and overseas commodities markets and prices contributed to fluctuations in farm incomes. The general trend for the decade is illustrated in Figure 4.2.

FIGURE 4.3 AVERAGE FARM INCOMES 1970-71 TO 1979-80



Data for these graphs were derived from Quarterly Review of Rural Economy, Feb. 1980, Vol. 2:4. Table 1. The data for 1978-79 and 1979-80 are estimates subject to revision.

4.37 The volume of rural production had reached a record level in 1968-69, but it declined by 3.7 per cent in 1969-70 and by a further 2.4 per cent in 1970-71. With seasonal conditions generally favourable, there was an upturn of the order of 4 per cent in rural production in 1971-72 and by 1973-74, farm incomes achieved record levels. Thereafter they slumped and did not recover until 1978-79. In the final two years of the decade, rural production increased, seasonal conditions were relatively favourable in most areas and prices rose for major commodities. In particular, beef production increased and its value rose. Strong export demand for meat, grains, and, to a lesser extent, wool, was a major influence in rising farm incomes in those years. Because of the often tight economic infrastructure in rural areas and the nexus between farm income and non-farm economic activity, the effects of variations in farm incomes permeate the whole community. This linkage, combined with widespread low incomes and consistently high education costs, makes educational opportunities for isolated children extremely sensitive to changes in the rural economy.

4.38 One apparently unexpected outcome of the means tests upon eligibility for additional allowances through the AIC Scheme has been to make potential recipients very careful about increases in productivity which merely offset benefits. Some parents regard the present system as providing incentives to restrain their income-earning capacity in order to qualify for additional assistance. For those people, the loss of allowances may be a greater financial penalty than is compensated for by their potentially higher income. Costs of education must be met and without the assistance available through the additional and supplementary allowances, they are taken from disposable family incomes. In effect, therefore, increases in income can represent real loss in the spending power of the family after costs of education have been deducted.

4.39 This apparent disincentive to generate private income has been discussed previously in relation to women in the rural workforce. In the farming and pastoral sector, the implications are more extensive. For those who must restrain production in order for them to afford the cost of educating their children, the longer-term consequence may be decline in the productivity of their holdings.

4.40 These consequences were illustrated by a property owner in Western Australia. He had one son at university and another who had deferred entry to university for twelve months. Two daughters were at boarding school, and three other children were studying at home by correspondence. For this family, the costs of education were substantial, and were anticipated to continue for a considerable number of years. The father described the combined consequences of costs and eligibility for educational assistance upon the productive capacity of his property in the following manner:

> The schooling controls your whole life... determines your decision with what you do on the station and everything ... because you're in a situation where you have to rely on the additional allowances. We can't for instance, take advantage of the drought loan which was going a few years back - or you don't get the loan for re-stocking, because of the fact that in order to pay them back, you have to make a profit. Now if you make a profit, you then pay tax and you don't get the additional allowances - which means the money that you're trying to pay back the loan with, is going into meeting school costs and so you just can't take the loan. The fact that we are depending upon the additional allowances controls the whole show. If you do make a few dollars in one year, well you can't fix the roof and you can't replace the old car, because that's still income and it's still taxable ... if you lose the allowances, and you spend the profit on the car, well you have still got the schooling costs to meet ... and then you've got no money to pay them. So if you make a few dollars, the only way that you can spend it is on the station and only on something which you can claim on as a tax deduction when you lodge your return. Your whole life, business and everything is controlled by the education factor.

4.41 A major issue for many parents, frequently raised in interviews, was the necessity for families to pay boarding school fees or hostel charges in advance. In many cases, families simply do not have the cash to pay. This cash-flow problem is illustrated in the following examples:

> The big thing I find is boarding schools require their term fees in advance. Now a lot of people, and I'm included, find it difficult to meet the term fees out of my own pocket. In fact, a couple of times I've had to borrow a full term's fees from the bank on a loan, until I got reimbursed - got some of it anyway. I find the Commonwealth Government is pretty good. They come across with their allowance - it's paid by cheque at the beginning of every term, but it doesn't cover half the cost you know. The State one which supplements it - well they're a term behind.

A supporting mother related the way in which she confronted the problem:

> Well, that's right, because you've got to outlay them first and I've only just, I've been very lucky that they're understanding, they're letting me pay bit by bit which I suppose is not helping their school, but they're giving me a hand, but whether they can do it next year and the year after, and the year after, and just wait for me to catch up, I don't know.

4.42 Some of the implications of low rural incomes for education for isolated families were presented succinctly by a pastoralist:

> There are basically two lots of people who receive the assistance: those who are primary producers and whose incomes fluctuate violently; wage and salary earners, who, if they're fortunate, their wages may increase perhaps at the same rate as inflation. For the primary producer, the main thing is assurity that once they've decided on an educational course for their children ... that economic circumstances which are sometimes beyond their control ... are not going to cut the ground completely from under their feet, and their children's futures completely shattered. For the wage and salary earner, it means that the means test levels have got to be such that they can afford to send their children where they want to and still remain living and working in the bush ... in whatever capacity it might be. With a means test level at around $10,000 ..., that's absolutely absurd if you're trying to send two and three children away to school or even to a hostel ... let alone a boarding school, and some people have got no choice other than a boarding school. Good as some secondary correspondence is these days, it's still a very poor option ... except for the few individuals to whom it is perfectly suited ... and that would be their choice. For the primary producer who's subject to the whims of the weather and the markets ... it would be nice to know, even if he looks like going bust, there's still a prop there that can assist with the education expenses.

4.43 The income data for AIC respondents reflects the fluctuations to which the rural economy is subjected. The general pattern of incomes suggest a population many of whom have incomes which fall below the poverty line in any one financial year. While it is true that more buoyant conditions in subsequent years may give rise to apparently high incomes, it is also clear that AIC provisions must take account of the necessity for assistance at the time when it is required. That is, calculations based on the previous financial year may in fact provide a false picture of a family's financial circumstances at the time of application.

4.44 A significant number of wage and salary earners in rural areas raised an issue which has particular relevance for a review of the AIC Scheme. They expressed disaffection with the weighting of conditions of eligibility for benefits toward the self-employed. The latter were thought to have distinct advantages with regard to qualifying for AIC benefits. The alleged ability of some primary producers and small businessmen to offset many expenses against their capital investment or business operating costs, and at the same time qualify for up to the full range of AIC allowances, was seen to be inequitable

by comparison with related opportunities available to wage and salary earners. Of course, perception of unequal distribution of advantages in relation to educational benefits was widely alluded to in the interviews conducted in the survey. Some parents on fixed salaries with PAYE tax provisions alleged the self-employed were advantaged. Some self-employed parents whose incomes had plummeted with bad seasons and poor prices alleged that the fixed salary earner, with wage indexation and other guarantees built into awards, had an advantage in providing and planning for educational costs. Other parents who were employed by mining companies or as station managers and had the additional costs (beyond Commonwealth and State allowances) of their children financed by the company or the station owner were seen to be (and in fact were) significantly advantaged. There was also widespread concern expressed about the secondary student benefits made available to Aboriginal families. Many parents pointed out that the Aboriginal scheme provided a more generous scale of benefits than AIC plus State allowances and were free of means test. They claimed this to be inherently inequitable and a source of tension in isolated communities.

4.45 There is no doubt that the spread of benefits and other sources of support for isolated families is very uneven in Australia. This puts pressure on the capacity of the AIC Scheme to achieve its basic objectives. These inconsistencies in support are compounded by the sharp fluctuations in rural incomes which periodically occur and the extraordinary cost of living variations which occur within and between regions. Of course, the latter problem is a key one in assessing the viability or otherwise of the cut-off points for means tests associated with additional educational allowances for isolated children or the capacity of parents to finance educational costs from disposable income.

Summary

4.46 This chapter has focused upon some of the main social and economic characteristics of many Western Australian and Queensland families receiving AIC benefits. The discussion has made reference to the most common grounds for AIC eligibility, family structure, home type and length of residence, degree of isolation (as measured by access to various services), category of employment and, lastly, family incomes.

4.47 Attention has been drawn to the differing circumstances of Western Australian and Queensland families. For example, it has been noted that Queensland AIC recipients are, on the whole, younger, more mobile and more isolated than their Western Australian counterparts. These State by State variations in the characteristics of beneficiaries of the AIC Scheme emphasise how difficult it is to mount a national scheme which has uniform benefits and yet achieves its basic equalisation of opportunity intentions. It has become clear that the majority of AIC recipients confront similar educational

problems which stem from their relative isolation. It is the magnitude of these problems which varies according to the differing social and economic circumstances of the families in question. Indeed, the number of educational options open to families is dependent upon such variables as their capacity to pay, their location, the nature of their employment, and the number and age of their children. It is to these issues and the question of choice in the educational process to which Chapter Five is addressed.

CHAPTER 5 THE APPLICATION OF AIC SCHEME BENEFITS

5.1 The great majority of isolated children are educated in the following ways in Australia:

(i) Living at home and being educated through correspondence and/or school of the air classes;

(ii) Living in a 'second' home established by their parents in a distant centre which enables the children to attend school on a daily basis;

(iii) Living away from home in a boarding situation with relatives, family friends or trusted strangers which enables the children to attend school as day students;

(iv) Boarding at a hostel which may be privately or publicly owned and operated, and which enables the children to attend school as day students;

(v) Living at a boarding school. With the exception of a few 'agricultural' high schools, virtually all boarding schools in Australia are non-government schools.

5.2 These five alternatives represent the theoretically broad array of choices available to isolated families. In practice, choice is often extremely limited by such factors as cost, private capacity to pay, extent of allowances, and availability of facilities. The latter factor is especially important. Some States have no hostels. Many boarding schools, especially in city areas to which parents may wish to send their children, are heavily over-subscribed and have long waiting lists. Many isolated families simply do not have access to private board in distant centres for their children. Of course, choice is conditioned by other elements too. These include the educational aspirations of children and expectations of their parents, knowledge of what alternatives are available, family 'traditions', parental judgments about what is 'best' for the needs and personality of the child, and parent perception of their children's likely occupational paths.

5.3 Private board implies trust that children will be subject to standards of out-of-school care and supervision comparable with those of their own homes. It imposes great obligations upon the adults responsible for the custody of such children. Hostel accommodation and the range of their services varies greatly both between and within States. The comprehensive reviews undertaken by Lenahan *et al.* (1980) and Fagg (1980) indicate notable diversity in quality of provision. Some hostels cater for 5-day board only, others for 7-day board; some supervise extra-curricula activities and evening study; others do not; some have support staff which might include a matron, house masters/mistresses, cooks,

housekeepers and yardmen, others do not. Similarly, the quality and range of services in boarding schools varies, but there is a general acceptance by such institutions that their after-school services should be complementary to their educational offerings. Whereas the primary concern of the majority of hostels is simply accommodation, for boarding schools, as the title suggests, the joint concerns are accommodation and education.

5.4 It is the purpose of this chapter to review the questions of choice for the isolated children surveyed in the project under the following headings:

- Type of school and enrolment
- Accommodation during the school year
- Travel arrangements
- Educational aspirations and expectations
- Costs of schooling and accommodation
- Adequacy of the AIC Scheme to support choice

Wherever pertinent, tables of data from the survey are included in the text. All other data referred to are contained in Appendix B to this report.

Type of School and Enrolment

5.5 Of the total sample of children surveyed by questionnaire, 2505 in Queensland and 1718 in Western Australia were enrolled at schools of one kind or another. Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1A indicate that they were distributed unevenly across the school grades. The data here reflect the total number of children of the families sampled and include some children who did not qualify for allowances. (Other children in their family did qualify)

FIGURE 5.1 NUMBER OF CHILDREN BY YEAR OF SCHOOLING

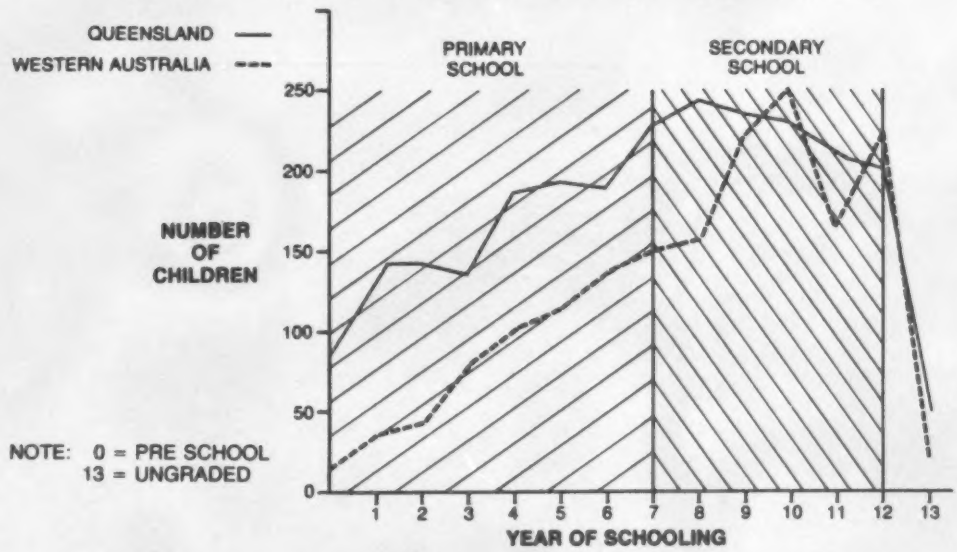


TABLE 5.1A

YEAR OF SCHOOLING BY TYPE OF ENROLMENT

Year of Schooling	Type of Enrolment					
	Day	Boarding	Correspondence	School of the Air	Total No.	%
Queensland						
0	13	2	62	5	82	3
1	58	10	54	24	146	6
2	88	10	31	17	146	6
3	84	12	36	9	141	6
4	104	26	37	20	187	7
5	119	22	38	19	198	8
6	118	34	35	9	196	8
7	143	48	24	13	228	9
8	79	152	12	1	244	10
9	74	160	8	2	244	10
10	73	160	5	0	238	10
11	31	174	1	0	206	8
12	38	161	2	0	201	8
13	15	26	7	0	48	1
Total	1037	997	352	119	2505	100
Western Australia						
0	11	0	0	2	13	1
1	25	2	1	5	33	2
2	35	0	2	7	44	3
3	53	6	4	12	75	4
4	72	2	6	12	92	5
5	94	4	0	11	109	6
6	112	5	5	10	132	8
7	135	13	4	2	154	9
8	75	87	3	0	165	10
9	82	139	5	0	226	13
10	103	142	3	0	248	14
11	42	119	8	0	169	10
12	53	174	8	0	235	14
13	16	6	1	0	23	1
Total	908	699	50	61	1718	100

Note: 13 = ungraded; 0 - pre-school

5.6 The differences between the two States reflect the fact that the children sampled in Western Australia were older than those in Queensland. Another notable difference lay in the proportions of children enrolled with correspondence/school of the air. In Queensland 21 per cent of students were so enrolled compared with only 7 per cent in Western Australia. The remainder at school were almost evenly distributed among boarding and day students in Queensland (40 per cent and 41 per cent respectively), and a stronger representation of day students (53 per cent) compared with boarders (40 per cent) in Western Australia.

5.7 Of the correspondence students, the majority in both States were in primary school. It is pertinent to examine the reasons parents choose this type of schooling for children at the primary, but not at the secondary level. Foremost are considerations of the particular developmental needs of their children during the years of childhood and adolescence. In response to the question, "Why did you choose correspondence rather than sending your child away to attend school?", parents were almost unanimous in their answers that the primary school child is too young to be separated from the family. Parents want their young children at home where they have greater personal security and can receive the values and attitude formation which only a family environment can provide. In the teenage years it is considered more important for children to mix with their peers for the social development which is deemed necessary for stable and successful adult life. Not unimportant in the considerations of many are the needs to develop skills and knowledge for future careers. Parents recognise that employment opportunities for youth in rural districts are limited and their children will most likely work in larger towns or cities. It is considered by many parents to be essential that teenagers become familiar with that environment and accustomed to living in such a community without constant access to parental support. Therefore, while correspondence tuition is generally considered adequate in the primary years, few saw it as fulfilling the more complex developmental needs of adolescence.

5.8 A second consideration is the respective academic demands of primary and secondary schooling. In the last decade there have been extensive changes in curricula, especially in mathematics, but most parents (usually the mother) see themselves as competent to supervise/teach the primary curriculum through correspondence education. At the secondary level the academic demands are more sophisticated and complex, the range of subjects more diverse, and the requirements for materials and equipment greater than can usually be provided adequately at home. Subjects available through secondary correspondence are necessarily restricted in their range and parents see them as limiting the educational horizons of their children. Sport is ranked high in parental expectations, especially those of fathers for their sons. Opportunities to participate in competitive and team sports are provided in schools and, given the strong perceptions of the social needs

of the developing adolescent, many parents see this as an essential part of education.

5.9 In the upper-secondary years, it is generally unavoidable that isolated young people live away from home. In the more closely-settled areas where three or four year high schools are available within reasonable travelling distance, the decision to send children away may be deferred until the end of Year 10. Isolated parents appear generally to accept this necessity to send their children away from home for at least the last two years of schooling. Many consider it preferable for their children to have the whole of their secondary schooling away from home, even where junior high school services are available locally. For many such parents, a desire to board their children in the last year of primary education was expressed. They saw their children as being better able to adjust initially to the school and living environment in the familiar curriculum of the primary school. The transition to secondary school is seen by many parents as disorienting for students, even in the normal school situation. For those who previously have been studying by correspondence the demands of social adjustment may compound the difficulty of transition. Hence, the final year of primary school is considered by some parents to be the optimal year for the boarding experience to begin. However, there are limited places for board at that level. Many schools have reduced or eliminated their facilities for primary boarders and hostels cater usually only for secondary students.

5.10 Of particular interest in Table 5.1A is the number of day students among the families of questionnaire respondents. Many of them do not qualify for AIC allowances. A large number of children in the total sample lived at home and attended a district primary school. Primary school services appear to be available to the majority of isolated families. This is made possible by the school-establishment policies of State governments and the comprehensive network of school bus services.

5.11 Of those children enrolled at schools whose parents were covered in the survey, the majority in Queensland (60 per cent) and Western Australia (69 per cent) were at government schools. These figures include children studying by correspondence and those travelling by bus to school daily. The remainder attended Catholic schools (17.4 per cent in Queensland and 13.5 per cent in Western Australia) and other non-government schools (22.9 per cent and 17.5 per cent in the two States respectively). Table 5.1B indicates the relationship between type of enrolment and employment category of parents. From both questionnaire and intefview, it appeared that the main factor influencing choice of school was the type of accommodation available. Boarding schools, which are predominantly non-government institutions, were strongly preferred by the majority of parents as against hostels or private board. There is no evidence that such a clear preference for boarding

TABLE 5.1B

EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY OF AIC PARENTS BY TYPE OF SCHOOL AND TYPE OF ENROLMENT FOR CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

Employment Category of Parent	Type of School				Type of Enrolment				
	Govt	Cath	Other	Total	Day	Board	Corres	School of Air	Total
Queensland									
Wage/Salary	24.2	5.4	4.8	34.4	14.7	11.0	6.8	1.9	34.4
Self-employed	34.0	11.6	18.0	63.6	24.1	26.9	8.2	4.4	63.6
Pensioner	0.9	0.3	0.0	1.2	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.0	1.2
Currently Unemployed	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.0	0.7
Other	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1
Total	59.7	17.4	22.9	100.0	39.8	38.4	15.4	6.4	100.0
Western Australia									
Wage/Salary	18.4	2.7	2.7	23.8	14.2	6.9	1.1	1.6	23.8
Self-employed	48.0	10.2	14.8	73.0	37.3	32.5	1.3	1.9	73.0
Pensioner	1.5	0.4	0.0	1.9	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.0	1.9
Currently Unemployed	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.8	0.6	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.8
Other	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5
Total	69.0	13.5	17.5	100.0	53.5	40.2	2.8	3.5	100.0

schools is waning or might be substantially altered by the provision of more extensive secondary school services in isolated country areas.

Accommodation during the School Year

5.12 In Western Australia, 53 per cent of the school age children in the sample lived away from home, 45 per cent lived at home and the remaining 2 per cent lived with one or the other of the parents in a second home. Of the 779 children shown in Table 5.2A as living at home in Western Australia, 76 per cent were in the primary or pre-primary years of schooling. Both questionnaire and interview surveys produced ample evidence of the reluctance of mothers to attempt to teach correspondence

TABLE 5.2A

YEAR OF SCHOOLING BY TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION

Year of Schooling	Type of Accommodation							
	Home	Relative/ Private Board	Hostel	Boarding School	2nd Home	Special Institution	No.	%
Queensland								
0	78	0	0	2	1	1	82	3
1	119	9	2	7	7	2	146	6
2	117	6	5	6	11	1	146	6
3	115	2	7	10	6	1	141	6
4	138	6	14	18	8	3	187	7
5	146	13	9	15	13	2	198	8
6	138	4	10	29	13	2	196	8
7	160	9	7	39	11	2	228	9
8	55	23	12	143	8	3	244	10
9	49	19	7	156	12	1	244	10
10	46	26	7	148	8	3	238	10
11	5	16	6	171	6	2	206	8
12	8	26	3	157	7	0	201	8
13	9	6	3	6	5	19	48	1
Total	1183	165	92	907	116	42	2505	100
Western Australia								
0	12	0	0	0	1	0	13	1
1	30	0	2	0	1	0	33	2
2	41	3	0	0	0	0	44	3
3	67	0	3	1	2	2	75	4
4	87	0	1	1	3	0	92	5
5	100	3	1	1	2	2	109	6
6	119	3	2	2	3	3	132	8
7	133	3	0	13	2	3	154	9
8	47	7	40	67	2	2	165	10
9	47	9	66	101	3	0	226	13
10	56	10	79	100	2	1	248	14
11	21	8	47	89	3	1	169	10
12	15	21	49	147	3	0	235	14
13	4	2	5	1	0	11	23	1
Total	779	69	295	523	27	25	1718	100

Note: 13 = Ungraded; 0 = Pre-school

lessons beyond the primary school level, general satisfaction with country primary schools where they are available, and the unwillingness of parents to have their young children live away from home.

5.13 In the Queensland survey, the proportion of children living at home (47 per cent) was marginally greater than that for Western Australia. This is explained, in part, by the larger enrolments in the primary correspondence school and the special provision in that State of pre-school correspondence allowances. It was influenced also by access and willingness to make use of hostels supervised by local authorities. Thirty-six per cent of the Queensland sample were at boarding schools compared with 30 per cent in Western Australia. The proportions in the two States living at hostels were 4 per cent and 17 per cent respectively. Furthermore, the proportion in second homes in Queensland (5 per cent) was greater than that for Western ustralia (2 per cent). The data in Table 5.2A show that, of the children surveyed, more in Queensland were living in a second home than were living in a hostel.

5.14 The apparently more extensive use of hostels in Western Australia reflects long-standing public policy for their provision. Capital outlay for their construction is subsidised by the State Government, they are maintained by private organisations and have their own management committees with administrative autonomy, but their recurrent costs are subsidised and their administration is co-ordinated by the Country High Schools Hostels Authority. More important, however, is their siting. They have been built in major country centres and are closely associated with the government senior high schools. As Table 5.2A indicates, whereas in Queensland more than half of the sampled children at hostels attended primary schools, in Western Australia 95 per cent were enrolled at secondary schools and almost a third of the total were in the senior secondary years (11 and 12). In Western Australia it is possible for a student to live at a government hostel and attend a Senior High School with accommodation costs comparable to those of non-government boarding schools, but without the burden of tuition fees. The hostel-plus-attendance-at-a-government-secondary-school is therefore, in theory, an attractive option. Despite this, there has been a history of substantial under-utilisation and the survey revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the option. Indeed, hostels in both Western Australia and Queensland appear to have had long experience of marginal viability. They are regarded by many parents as a second option in times when seasons or prices are bad and the cost of a boarding school is beyond them.

5.15 As Table 5.2B indicates, there is a fairly high level of parental dissatisfaction with accommodation for their children who live away from home to attend school. Over 13 per cent of Queensland parents and 12 per cent of Western Australian parents expressed considerable dissatisfaction, and this was confirmed in the interview program. The dissatisfaction centred

overwhelmingly on lack of adequate care and supervision and lack of communication with the home. Other areas of complaint were poor facilities, food and amenities, and the personality and disposition of those in charge. While there appears to be greater satisfaction with boarding schools in Western Australia relative to Queensland and hostels in Queensland relative to Western Australia, these differences were not significant.

TABLE 5.2B

TYPE OF AND SATISFACTION/DISSATISFACTION WITH LIVING AWAY FROM HOME ACCOMMODATION

Type of Accommodation	Satisfied No. of Students	Dissatisfied No. of Students
Queensland		
Board with relative	72	8
Other private board	75	15
Hostel	82	12
Boarding school	778	99
Second home	43	10
Special institution	49	4
Total	1099	148
Western Australia		
Board with relative	27	3
Other private board	42	6
Hostel	264	60
Boarding school	486	38
Second home	20	1
Special institution	26	1
Total	865	109

5.16 It should be emphasised that the numbers of children surveyed at hostels in the two States (92 in Queensland and 295 in Western Australia) as a proportion of those living away from home (7 per cent and 31 per cent respectively) were markedly different. It seems a reasonable assumption that many parents in Queensland expressed their dissatisfaction by refraining from using hostels.

5.17 Parental concerns about care and supervision, and the criteria which usually lead them to choose boarding schools as against hostels, are summed up in the following interview excerpts:

Husband - Up to a certain point it is our choice to send him to a boarding school. I know that there are places like a hostel available but we figured that if we're going to have to send the children away, we might as well send them to what we consider ... the best you can get for them because generally speaking, if you send them to schools you know that they're going to be pretty well looked after and this is one of the biggest things when you send your kids away; it's knowing that they're being looked after in their free time ... you know that they're not roaming the streets and so forth which I think happens at some of the hostels.

Wife - It's peace of mind.

Another couple described what quality of care meant for them; confidence in the institution, access to family, religion and supervised extra-curricula activities.

Q. Why did you choose a boarding school instead of a hostel or private board?

Husband - I won't put them in order of importance or priority - number one, I had been to the school and I knew it - or thought I did. Secondly, the school had gone co-educational since I left and we thought that was a very definite plus - the fact that the children could be at the same school. Another reason for choosing the particular school was that there are occasions when you need family close by, so that was the net result.

Wife - Also, the reason that we chose boarding school over a hostel, was that we wanted 24 hour care - as near as possible to a home situation. We also wanted them to receive a religious component ....

Husband - Generally, boarding schools are geared up far better to cater for the extra curricula needs - sporting activities, the arts, music, theatre ... all the peripheral things that still make up for a whole education. Most of those things would not be available at hostels.

5.18 A minority of respondents indicated that they chose a second home in preference to correspondence education or having their children live away from home. In Queensland, more parents used the second home than those resident in hostels. In Western Australia only 1.6 per cent of the children surveyed were in second homes.

5.19 In general, parents indicated their reluctance to divide the family by establishing a second home, even if it was an economic possibility. They cited consequent matrimonial and family tensions as major deterrents. For others, given their disposable incomes and their incapacity to maintain their children elsewhere, the second home is the only financially viable means of providing an adequate education. Cost is not the only factor determining that choice. Some children could not be boarded at schools or hostels because of medical conditions requiring daily care. Others at special schools or undergoing remedial education needed the type of home care not possible in the institutional setting. In some cases mothers were unable to cope with correspondence lessons and, for a variety of reasons, other types of accommodation for their children were not feasible.

5.20 In these and similar instances, the second home is the only practical choice if children are to have access to school. It is a choice exercised in the light of attendant costs of establishing and maintaining the second home, the problem of maintaining contact with the family home as regularly as possible, and personal costs in terms of the effects of separation upon matrimonial harmony and family relationships. The second home involves considerable personal sacrifice. It is not a popular alternative for parents of isolated children, but given particular family considerations, for some it is the best option.

Travel arrangements

5.21 Many boarding schools and hostels close their accommodation facilities during school term vacations. Similarly, most of those which provide for other than 5-day weekly accommodation have a mid-term 'boarders' weekend' during which the boarding facility is vacated and children are normally expected to return to their homes. This means that children can anticipate a minimum equivalent of five return journeys a year between their homes and places of board.

TABLE 5.3A

LEVEL OF SCHOOLING BY FREQUENCY OF HOME VISITS FOR CHILDREN LIVING AWAY FROM HOME

Level of Schooling	Frequency of Home Visits				
	Weekly	Monthly	1/Term	1/Year	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Queensland					
Primary (Years 1-7) Junior Secondary (Years 8-10)	11.2	3.9	6.8	0.1	22.0
Senior Secondary (Years 11-12)	5.9	15.2	23.7	0.1	44.9
Ungraded	3.0	9.3	17.4	0.2	29.9
Total	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.2	3.2
Western Australia	21.1	29.4	48.9	0.6	100.0
Primary (Years 1-7) Junior Secondary (Years 8-10)	1.5	0.3	3.4	0.1	5.3
Senior Secondary (Years 11-12)	4.9	18.9	29.4	0.0	53.1
Ungraded	2.5	17.0	19.9	0.1	39.6
Total	0.1	0.7	1.2	0.0	2.0
	9.0	36.9	53.9	0.2	100.0

5.22 The data of Table 5.3A indicate that not all children visit their homes as frequently as the organisation of their school year permits. In Western Australia 54 per cent of surveyed children living away from home returned to their homes only once a term, that is, approximately once every three months. Thirty seven per cent returned home monthly. A similar proportion of children in Queensland returned home once a term, but the incidence of weekly travel was greater and monthly travel, in consequence, was less. In that State 21 per cent of children returned home weekly. Half of those were in primary schools. It is assumed that many of them lived in 5-day week hostels in country towns accessible from their homes.

5.23 Children who do not travel home (and the evidence set out in Table 5.3A is that at least half do not during mid-term) must stay stay with relatives or friends if the school does not allow them to remain in residence. Reference was made earlier to access to the extended family as influencing parental choice of school. It is an important consideration if travel home is inhibited by costs or is impossible because of the sheer logistics of transporting children over long distances in a short time. Parents often choose a school in a town where their children can stay with relatives or friends during mid-term breaks or one which is directly accessible by public transport. This might mean by-passing a boarding school or hostel which is closer. This consequence was described by a north-Queensland parent:

> Travel is one of the biggest problems ... people are now sending children to boarding school at Brisbane, not the closest one, Charters Towers, because there's better continuity of (travel) service to Brisbane than Charters Towers. This means they get their children home quicker and they are not over-nighting anywhere.

5.24 The evidence of the location of family homes considered in the previous chapter is sufficient to illustrate the distances involved for some families. It does not reveal the problems of access to public transport, the impracticability of travel in some areas because of difficult terrain or seasonal conditions, or the cost of transportation or earnings foregone in fetching children home.

5.25 Apart from the total costs of sending their children away to school, problems of transport were the most consistent concerns of parents. Fares on public transport have increased significantly since 1973. They represent a major item of cost for many parents of isolated children and are an especially heavy burden for those on low incomes. By judicious choice of schools and by careful budgetting of allowances and private incomes, some low income families are able to meet the direct costs of schooling, that is the 'through the gate' costs. For these people costs of transport, even though anticipated, are often unmanageable. Many minimise them by having their children return home only for term vacations.

5.26 Problems relating to access are most obvious in those regions affected by tropical seasonal conditions. People living in the Peninsular and Gulf Country of northern Queensland and the Kimberleys of Western Australia are often marooned during the wet season. The Channel Country of western Queensland is not as regularly affected, but the consequences of flooding are equally as severe for access to transport and school. In those other regions the wet season coincides with the commencement of the school year and major problems associated with getting children to school occur annually.

For some it requires chartering aircraft and they display considerable ingenuity and tenacity in accomplishing the task. The following excerpt from an interview with a mother in northern Queensland is illustrative:

> Q. How do you get to and from boarding school?
>
> A. We had to charter a plane for the first term ... $480 for the charter ... that's to get it to go from (the station) to Mareeba and then (the father's) mother lives down there and she usually picks (the child) up and takes her to Herberton ... but other than that it's complicated because she would have to go on the mail plane from home on Thursday, go to Cooktown, get on the Cooktown plane Friday morning, go to Cairns, and then we've got to get her from Cairns to Herberton.

5.27 Even for those who do have access to rail or road transport there are inconveniences to be endured: long journeys by second-class rail or road bus, timetables which do not coincide with the days school break up for vacations, arrival times which necessitate overnight stays at the terminus towns and long distances over roads of variable quality to deliver children to the terminus or to drive them home. In most instances this is done at least six times a year.

Educational Aspirations and Expectations

5.28 A substantial belief in the need for a completed secondary schooling or even higher education for children living in rural areas was reflected in the aspirations of the respondents. Employment opportunities in rural areas are limited and apparently declining. This means that many young people have to move to urban areas for employment. To improve their competitiveness, there is recognition by parents that the standards and levels of their education must be at least equal with their city counterparts. Even for those electing to stay on the land, educational requirements are rising. Primary production has become more capital intensive and there is a perceived need for those who will succeed to family properties or who aspire to be property managers to be familiar with the complexities of work in business management and farm technology. There is also awareness that rural life is restrictive and education is seen by some as a means of broadening the child's outlook and perceptions of the self and the world.

5.29 The data of Table 5.4A illustrate the aspirations of parents for their children's education. Approximately one third of the respondents in both States expected their children to proceed to Years 11 and 12, that is, to complete their secondary schooling. Thirty-two per cent in Western Australia and 28 per cent in Queensland anticipated tertiary education at a college of advanced education or university, while 11 per cent and 13 per cent in the two States respectively expected that their children will undertake other post-secondary education

(including agricultural education). Of considerable importance, given the perceived occupational opportunities in rural areas, is the proportion who nominated trade training.

Table 5.4A

LEVEL OF EDUCATION EXPECTED

Expected Level	Queensland		Western Australia	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
University or CAE	656	32	852	28
Trade training courses	218	11	293	10
Other (including agricultural education)	213	11	413	13
Year 11-12	718	35	988	32
Complete Year 10	185	9	454	15
Less than Year 10	37	2	65	2
Total	2027	100	3065	100

5.30 These educational expectations mean that many parents must face continuing outlay after their children have completed their schooling. For many respondents those extended costs were already being experienced. In Queensland 162 children of the sample population were students at post-secondary institutions. Forty-four per cent of these were at technical/ agricultural colleges, and the remainder at universities and colleges of education (see Table 9, Appendix B). For those families, outlay for education from disposable family income increased accordingly. Parents consistently argued that one of the major weaknesses in the assumptions underlying the AIC Scheme was that the main educational burden on parents related to children at school. They suggested that much more attention ought to be given to the demands on a family with dependent youngsters undertaking post-secondary education.

Costs of Schooling and Accommodation

5.31 Many of the responses to this aspect of the questionnarie indicated uncertainty about the sources of allowances, (i.e. whether they were paid by the Commonwealth or State authorities), and about the actual amounts received. The obvious confusion about the reported amounts received in comparison with the known amounts payable under the various schemes of financial assistance underlines a general community ignorance about which level of government has what sort of responsibility for education in Australia. Some respondents apparently assumed it to be a State government service and attributed all financial assistance for isolated students to that source. Others indicated an

assumption that all payments come from the Commonwealth. Some thought that the allowances come not from government, but from the ICPA. Indeed, the AIC Allowance was consistently referred to in interview as the 'ICPA Allowance'.

5.32 Table 5.5A sets out a proportional analysis of education costs per child for each family surveyed. The tuition costs per child reported ranged between $99 and $4,000 in Queensland and up to $5,000 in Western Australia for 1979. In both States a significant group of families (22 per cent in Queensland and 29 per cent in Western Australia) were required to pay more than $1,000 per child in tuition fees in 1979. The data in Tables 5.1B and 5.2A indicate the types of schools attended by these children. While they are not directly comparable with the data in Table 5.5A, they do indicate a compatible distribution of enrolments.[1]

5.33 A large proportion of families in both States surveyed reported that their expenditure on board for children living away from home exceeded $1,000 per child in 1979 (46 per cent in Queensland and 68 per cent in Western Australia). For almost one third of the respondents in Western Australia and one quarter in Queensland boarding expenses incurred were in excess of $2,000 per child. This is important in relation to the AIC Scheme, which has a prime objective of alleviating such costs. When costs of tuition are added to costs of board, it is apparent that the total real costs to parents, even after financial assistance from government authorities is deducted, represent significant private outlay.

5.34 There are significant costs over and above those for boarding and/or tuition. They are requirements of both hostels and boarding schools and include building fees or levies, sick bay fees, and registration fees. In addition, there are costs of books, extra sets of clothing, uniforms, sport equipment, bedding, laundry, and so on (see Tables 15 and 15A, Appendix B). Many parents in both States claimed that these 'hidden costs' made a very considerable impact on the total costs of educating their children and imposed unanticipated pressure on their budgets.

5.35 Travel contributes to these 'hidden costs'. A majority of respondents reported costs of between $100 and $499 per child. Fifteen per cent of children in Queensland and 10 per cent in Western Australia incurred costs of travel in excess of $500 per child. When added to other costs they are significant. This is especially so when there are two or more children to be educated, where distances to school are great, or where climatic

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1. For detailed information about non-government school charges for tuition fees and board in 1979 see *Boarding Schools Register Australia 1979, July 1979,* prepared by the National Council of Independent Schools. More recent data is available in *Boarding Schools Register Australia 1981.*

TABLE 5.5A

ANALYSIS OF EDUCATION EXPENSES PER CHILD, 1979, FOR EACH RESPONDENT FAMILY

Amounts	Tuition Fees	Boarding Fees	Travel	Correspondence
	%	%	%	%
Western Australia				
$0 to $99	15	3	11	10
$100 to $499	17	2	26	3
$500 to $999	8	8	7	1
$1,000 to $1,999	16	36	2	0
$2,000 to $2,999	4	13	1	
$3,000 to $3,999	8	14	0	
$4,000 to $4,999	1	3	0	0
$5,000 and over	0	2	0	0
Sub-total	69	81	47	15
No response	31	19	53	85
Total	100	100	100	100
Queensland				
$0 to $99	5	0	5	2
$100 to $499	10	2	24	5
$500 to $499	11	8	9	2
$1,000 to $1,999	15	24	5	0
$2,000 to $2,999	5	12	1	0
$3,000 to $3,999	2	6	0	1
$4,000 to $4,999	0	3	0	1
$5,000 and over	0	1	0	0
Sub-total	48	55	45	11
No response	52	45	55	89
Total	100	100	100	100

conditions or difficult terrain make air transport necessary. The evidence of this survey suggests that even with assistance from governments, many parents are hard-pressed to meet the private costs incurred for the education of their children. For such parents, costs are borne not only from disposable family income, but from other sources. Of the 862 families in Western Australia, 47 per cent did not have to seek any additional financial assistance from elsewhere, 35 per cent had to go to one other source and 18 per cent sought assistance from two or more other sources. (See Tables 16A and 16B, Appendix B). In other words, over half the families had to seek additional financial assistance to educate their children. In Queensland 28 per cent of the families had to seek additional finance from one source and 16 per cent from two or more sources. This total of 44 per cent was less than in Western Australia and attests to the value of the allowances provided by the Queensland Government.

Correspondence Education

5.36 Table 5.5B indicates that books and the cost of a governess were the highest costs for those with children on correspondence, with the wages of a governess being the largest and most consistently high. The only category where costs exceeded $5,000 per child was for a governess and this accounted for most of the costs over $2,000. The majority of those with book costs over $99 per child spent between $100 and $499.

5.37 The small number of families in Queensland and Western Australia with correspondence costs over $100 per child is consistent with the general impression suggested by respondents' comments that there is a greater need for improved services in this area rather than more financial assistance (see Tables 14A, 14B, Appendix B). The major observation suggested by these data concerning the education of children by correspondence is that the costs involved are human rather than financial. The emotional and physical strain endured by mother-supervisors were regarded by most as considerably more onerous than the financial burden.

5.38 The correspondence allowance (including the reimburseable portion available before 1981) was shown to be inadequate as assistance for the employment of a governess, but it was sufficient for the purchase of education materials such as books and learning resources for the great majority of families. The most common suggestions for the improvement in this aspect of the program were:

- more financial assistance to enable the employment of a home help or other labour to free the mother for teaching;
- more realistic allowances to employ a governess (the then current reimbursement allowance would have paid a governess' wages for less than one term);
- more contact with itinerant teachers and other mothers with children on correspondence.

5.39 Many problems in correspondence education exposed in the survey cannot be resolved merely by the provision of direct financial benefits to isolated families. Of course it should not be assumed that there was widespread dissatisfaction with correspondence education. Most parents in the sample expressed satisfaction with the quality of primary education their children received through correspondence. Their academic progress appears to be normal and most are equal to their peers when they enter ordinary schooling. Few were seen to be academically disadvantaged. Those parents who had experience with correspondence tuition over an extended period observed that the delivery of educational services through the correspondence schools has improved markedly in recent years. Audio-visual learning aids, lending library facilities, the school of the air and, where provided, itinerant teachers, supplement the adequate learning materials and distance instruction provided through the correspondence schools. Some deficiencies in correspondence instruction and needs for further improvement were identified. For example -

- Some aspects of syllabuses in current use were thought to be inappropriate to the learning experiences and the social and geographic environments of country children.

- Many parents thought greater use might be made of audio-visual learning aids. Those now available are well received and strong hope was expressed that the introduction of satellite television will overcome some of the technological constraints upon the more extensive use of instructional material already available to children in cities and larger urban areas.

- It was widely felt that insufficient services were available for diagnosis and remediation of learning problems in particular aspects of the curriculum, the identification and treatment of specific learning difficulties, and information and advice on special education.

5.40 Other parental criticisms related to particular regions or particular systems. Such problems were seen to be policy matters of the respective State Education Departments. The priority need identified in the review was for personnel to assist home supervisors to resolve their own anxieties or to advise on appropriate teaching and remedial methods.

5.41 There is much evidence that many young mothers teaching children for the first time experienced great anxiety about whether or not they were doing what was best for their children, uncertainty about academic standards, and the

inevitable tension between maternal caring and the discipline of the school room.

5.42 The dilemma of many was summarised in this interview with a mother who had taught her seven children by correspondence over a period of twenty-two years. For three years she had four at home learning by correspondence.

> Q. What sort of problems confront mother as teacher?
>
> A. There are quite a number. For a start, she's continually under a certain amount of anxiety as to whether she is doing the teaching properly. Most mothers who teach their children from the correspondence school papers are untrained and of course, all feel a sense of inadequacy about teaching their own children from the papers. The papers are very well explained and are really quite wonderful in lots of ways about putting the content there for you, but you are untrained, you have absolutely no way of gauging whether you're doing a good job.

5.43 This woman's opinion, echoed by many in the survey, was that the most urgent need for isolated children on correspondence was not for increased allowances but for trained people to visit correspondence pupils in their homes to assess their progress, to advise home supervisors on teaching methods and, most importantly, to reassure the home-supervisors that they are 'on the right track'.

TABLE 5.5B

ANALYSIS OF CORRESPONDENCE COSTS

Queensland

Amount	Postage	Books	Teaching Aids	Audio Equipment	Governess	Accommodation	Domestic Help
(a)$0 to $99	342	281	311	305	288	304	290
$100 to $499	1	65	31	36	2	37	26
$500 to $999		5	1	2	7		15
$1,000 to $1,999		2			3	2	7
$2,000 to $2,999					21		4
$3,000 to $3,999					9		
$4,000 to $4,999					9		1
$5,000 and over					4		
Total no. of families with costs over $100	1	62	32	38	55	39	53

Western Australia

(a)$0 to $99	74	32	61	65	52	58	52
$100 to $499	2	42	15	7	3	13	6
$500 to $999		2		1	3	4	6
$1,000 to $1,999				1	5	1	3
$2,000 to $2,999					5		3
$3,000 to $3,999					4		1
$4,000 to $4,999					4		1
$5,000 and over							
Total no. of families with costs over $100	2	44	15	9	24	18	20

There was a total of 343 families with children on correspondence and/or school of the air in Queensland
There was a total of 76 families with children on correspondence and/or school of the air in Western Australia

(a) Includes those respondents who left this question blank i.e. 'no response'

Sources of Assistance to Isolated Families

5.44 Table 5.5C indicates that in Western Australia, of the 1857 school age children in the survey, 1048 received assistance under the Commonwealth's AIC Scheme while in Queensland the number was 1596 (of a total of 3957) children. It is not possible to estimate how many children who might otherwise be eligible were not receiving the allowances.

5.45 Nine hundred and six children in Western Australia received the Basic Boarding Allowance (86.5 per cent of all those receiving assistance). One hundred and seventy one (19 per cent) of that group received the Additional Boarding Allowance and 138 also were paid the Special Supplementary Allowance. This means that 735 children received only the Basic Boarding Allowance and were therefore eligible for the Western Australian Boarding Away From Home Allowance ($250).. However, only 609 children were reported as receiving that financial assistance. This reinforces the strong suggestions made by many respondents that there is a need for more publicity to be given to the State allowance. Many parents also suggested that the practice in Western Australia of withdrawing the State allowance in proportion to the amount of the Additional and/or Special Supplementary Commonwealth Allowances received was inequitable. Those in receipt of the extra allowances under the AIC Scheme are those assessed as having the greatest need for financial assistance to educate their children and the denial of State allowances was seen by many parents to be a denial to those in need.

5.46 In Queensland, 67 per cent (1072) of the children surveyed received the Basic Boarding Allowance. Of these, 387 (36 per cent) also received the Additional Allowance. This figure is almost double that for Western Australia. As in Western Australia, there is a significant disparity between the number of Queensland children eligible for the State Remote Area Allowance (that is 1072) and those who actually received the allowance (that is 848). This may be a consequence of inadequate public information on the State allowance. It may also reflect the confusion referred to above about sources of financial assistance.

5.47 Of particular interest is the category of school attended by those who qualified for living away from home allowances. The data of Tables 5.1A and 5.1B indicated that the majority of students in the sample were enrolled at government schools. However, when correspondence students and those travelling daily by bus to school are eliminated, the distribution among categories of schools changes significantly. The data in Table 5.5D shows the number of children in receipt of AIC boarding allowances covered by the survey. They all live away from home. It must be noted that the totals are different from those of the other tables referred to above because of wastage in the sample when the responses with incomplete

TABLE 5.5C

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN RECEIPT OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM ALL SOURCES

Queensland

(i) Commonwealth Allowance (AIC)	Numbers of Recipients		Percent
	Basic	Additional	
Basic boarding	1072		67
Additional boarding		387	
Special supplementary		289	
Second home	93		6
Additional second home		14	
Correspondence	431		27
Correspondence reimbursement		164	
Total	1596		100

Note: Those who receive additional allowances are included in the numbers who recive the basic allowances

(ii) State Allowance	Numbers of Recipients
Remote area allowance	848
Student allowance	229
Senior remote area scholarship	119
(iii) Other Financial Assistance	128

Western Australia

(i) Commonwealth Allowance (AIC)

	Number of Recipients		Percent
	Basic	Additional	
Basic boarding	906		86.5
Additional boarding		171	
Special supplementary		138	
Second home	21		2.0
Additional second home		1	
Correspondence	121		11.5
Correspondence reimbursement		77	
Total	1048		100

(ii) State Allowance	Number of Recipients
State boarding away from home allowance	609
(iii) Other Financial Assistance	57

TABLE 5,5D

CATEGORY OF SCHOOL BY TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION BY LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE - FOR STUDENTS LIVING AWAY FROM HOME

Category of School	Level of Assistance:	TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION								
		Private Board		Hostel		Boarding School		Special Institution		Totals
		B,B.	B,B. + A/S	B,B.	B,B. + A/S	B,B.	B,B. + A/S	B,B.	B,B. + A/S	
Queensland										
Government		64	38	30	31	15	5	21	5	209
Roman Catholic		5	7	7	2	146	85	2	0	254
Other non-government		2	1	0	0	253	152	9	4	421
		71	46	37	33	414	242	32	9	884
		Attendance at Govt. School = 209								
		Attendance at Non-govt. School = 675								
Western Australia										
Government		36	11	168	56	49	8	10	5	343
Roman Catholic		4	1	0	1	90	22	0	0	118
Other non-government		4	0	4	0	159	44	2	0	213
		44	12	172	57	298	74	12	5	674
		Attendance at Govt. School = 343								
		Attendance at Non-govt. School = 331								

Note: B,B. = Basic Boarding Allowance only
+A/S = Additional and/or supplementary

information about categories of schools, types of accommodation, and/or the levels of financial assistance were eliminated for the correlation. Even so, the available data indicate that in Queensland 23 per cent of those children living away from home were at government schools, 29 per cent were at Catholic schools, and 48 per cent were at other non-government schools. In Western Australia the respective proportions were 51 per cent, 17 per cent and 32 per cent. This re-affirms previous observations about adequate hostels enabling access to government schools in Western Australia, and the lack of choice in Queensland. Clearly, in the latter State, the major facilities used by children living away from home are boarding schools.

5.48 A second observation suggested by the data of Table 5.5B is that while private capacity to pay has a strong bearing upon choice of school and choice of accommodation, for those who qualify for the full range of AIC allowances (Basic Boarding, Additional Boarding and Special Supplementary Allowances) access to boarding schools is possible. It must be assumed that in Queensland a large number of those respondents were also in receipt of the allowances provided by the State Government, thereby enhancing their opportunities to attend boarding schools. Even in Western Australia, however, where the Boarding Away From Home Allowance is denied those who receive the additional payments from the Commonwealth, there is a significant number of such children who attend non-government boarding schools.

Perceptions of the Adequacy of the AIC Scheme

5.49 There is no doubt that isolated children in Australia depend heavily for their access to education on the benefits provided by the AIC Scheme. Together with various forms of State support, the AIC Scheme enables thousands of children to attend boarding schools, live at hostels and attend government schools, live in second homes and receive additional help with correspondence tuition. However, as the data gathered by questionnaire and interview in Western Australia and Queensland revealed, for many families the assistance provided through the AIC Scheme falls short of parental needs and expectations.

5.50 Table 5.6A summarises the attitudes of parents toward various aspects of the scheme. The two most prominent areas of dissatisfaction relate to the annual increases in allowances and the cost of travel. Parents felt very strongly that the allowances should be increased according to inflation so that their real value is not eroded. They also stressed that extra travel costs are not a fair burden for isolated parents.

TABLE 5.6A

PARENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE ADEQUACY OF THE AIC SCHEME

Weighted mean scores for answers to questions regarding the administration of the scheme, using the following weights:

Strongly agree = + 2; Agree = + 1; Uncertain = 0
Strongly disagree = - 2; Disagree = - 1;

Question	W.A.	QLD
There is plenty of information available to parents about the AIC Scheme	+ 0.45	+ 0,47
The application forms are easy to read and fill in	+ 0,50	+ 0,58
The payment of allowances is usually prompt and regular	+ 1,16	+ 1,05
The boarding allowances should be increased annually to allow for inflation	+ 1,55	+ 1,52
The means test on additional allowances is fair	+ 0,25	0.00
The cost of travel between home and school is a fair cost to be borne by parents	- 0,28	- 0,50
The distance from school to qualify for assistance is appropriate in the area where I live	+ 0.92	+ 0,91

5,51 The major recommendations for improvement suggested by the respondents in both questionnaire and interview were:

(i) adequate financial assistance to be provided in the scheme to compensate for costs of travel between home and school. (Conveyance allowances provided by State Governments were considered to be inadequate and unrealistic);

(ii) boarding allowances should be indexed in proportion to adjustments in the consumer price index;

(iii) there should be more information about the scheme made available;

(iv) the application procedures should be modified and, in particular, the application form simplified.

Although these four recommendations were the subject of almost universal agreement, other areas reflected divided opinion among parents. While many parents regarded the Marginal Adjusted Family Income level in relation to additional allowances as far too low to enable numbers of poor families to gain access to much needed support, others saw it as being an appropriate way of ensuring that only the very needy obtained extra benefits. Although many families claimed that the AIC allowances gave inadequate recognition to the necessity to use non-government boarding schools with consequent high tuition costs, others argued that these extra costs were a necessary price of choice. Again, although many parents suggested that the conditions governing access to AIC benefits, especially the distance qualifications, are unrealistically restrictive, others suggested that to modify them would be to threaten a country school system that was vital to the rural community. While some parents on wages or salaries suggested that the AIC Scheme conditions were unfairly weighted to the advantage of the self-employed and the primary producers, others suggested that these so-called advantages were more than offset by the generally low and unrealiable incomes which characterised so many of the rural self-employed.

5.52 Finally, there were mixed reactions to the worth of the Correspondence Allowances. Where the allowances were used to support the employment of a governess or tutor or domestic help (to free the mother for supervisory duties), the allowance was regarded as a useful but minor contribution. Where the allowance was seen as providing for additional costs associated with Correspondence School/School of the Air programs, it was regarded as more than adequate, even before it was raised to a flat rate of $500 per child.

Summary

5.53 This chapter has reviewed the educational choices available to isolated children and the costs parents have to meet in providing appropriate schooling for them. The possibilities are limited and the factors influencing choice are numerous. It was observed that:

- correspondence schools are preferred to boarding children away from home during the primary school years;
- sending children away from home for their secondary education is considered necessary because of the many developmental needs of adolescence;
- boarding schools are generally more favoured than hostels because parents are more confident about the quality of pastoral care and supervision they offer;

- private capacity to pay is an important factor considered by parents in deciding the place of education for their children;

- travel is a pressing concern and for many it represents a considerable financial burden when added to the other costs of maintaining children away from home.

5.54 A general conclusion drawn from the survey and interview was that for those whose children must live away from home for educational purposes costs are high, and that the AIC Scheme has deteriorated in its capacity to assist with meeting those costs. The value of the allowance has not kept pace with increases in boarding costs. For those studying by correspondence, the financial costs are small. Where a governess or tutor is employed to supervise lessons, or where home help is employed so that a mother can supervise lessons, the value of the Correspondence Allowance is insufficient to cover even a majority of costs. Otherwise, the existing amount payable in the Correspondence Allowance is adequate to meet additional costs incurred.

CHAPTER 6 RECOMMENDED DIRECTIONS FOR THE AIC SCHEME AND SUPPORT FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN

Means-testing the Boarding Allowance

6.1 An important issue to be resolved is whether or not the basic AIC Boarding Allowance should be means-tested. Since the scheme commenced, it has had as an underlying principle that, in ensuring equality of educational opportunity for isolated children, parents should not be liable for an additional financial penalty if they have to send their children away to a government school.

6.2 Equality of opportunity is a widely accepted principle in public policy for education in Australia, but the free-of-means-test Basic Boarding Allowance is fairly unique in advancing that principle by making financial assistance available to target groups in the general student population. Only in the Aboriginal Secondary Education Grant Scheme are student allowances not subject to assessment of family income. All other payments to individuals for education by the Commonwealth Government take account of private financial capacity.

6.3 No justification was advanced in the report of the working party of Commonwealth and State officials of June 1972 (see Chapter 1) for the recommendation that the basic allowance should be provided irrespective of family income. One might assume that it was premised on an obligation on the part of governments to provide facilities when they legislated for free and compulsory schooling. If this were the case it might follow that where it is not viable economically to do so, as in areas of sparsity of school-age population, then there is a consequent obligation on governments to assist children to travel to the nearest government school. In fact, at law, no such obligation necessarily exists. Both the Queensland Education Act and the Western Australian Education Act, for example, provide that the Minister, "may, subject to this Act", establish and maintain government schools.1 The use of the optional 'may' rather than the obligatory 'shall' eliminates compulsion. Both of these Acts provide that daily attendance shall not be compulsory where certain distance criteria apply (Queensland, s.30(4); Western Australia s.13(i)). In the case of Queensland where a child is precluded from attendance because of distance from a school, enrolment for approved correspondence courses is required, "unless such child is receiving instruction in some other manner which, in the opinion of the Minister, is efficient". (s.31)

6.4 However, while a legal obligation cannot be established, governments have accepted a general responsibility to advance

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1. Queensland, *Education Act, 1964-70* (No. 73 of 1964 amended by *Education Act Amendment Act, 1970*, No. 9 and *Education Act Amendment Act, 1970* (No. 2), (No. 47) section 14. Western Australia, *Education Act, 1929-1976* (No. 33 of 1928 as amended by No. 18 of 1976) section 9.

educational opportunities of all children. In every State, reasonable efforts are made to provide access to some form of schooling. The most compelling arguments for equality are to be seen not in any legal obligation, but in social equity and compensatory provision for those who might be disadvantaged by out-of-school circumstances.

6.5 The operation of the latter is seen most clearly in the Australian context in some of the programs sponsored by the Commonwealth Schools Commission, notably the Disadvantaged Schools, Special Education, Migrant Education and Country Areas Programs. The attitude underpinning them was explained in the Report, *Schools in Australia*[2], in these terms:

> "... the standard of schooling a child receives should not depend on what his parents are able or willing to contribute to it ... there are good reasons for attempting to compensate to some extent through schooling for unequal out-of-school situations in order to ensure that a child's overall condition of upbringing is as free from restriction due to circumstances of his family as public action through the schools can make it."

6.6 In all of these compensatory programs educational provision additional to the norm is being made available in attempts to compensate for disadvantage. The same principle might reasonably be applied to isolated children. Research evidence suggests that many are 'children at risk'. Because daily attendance at school is difficult or impossible for them, they do not have educational opportunity equal to what elsewhere in Australia is the norm. If they are disadvantaged by the distance of their homes from an appropriate school, then public action is justified on grounds of social equity to compensate for that disadvantage. Basic boarding allowances free of means test might be a unique provision but it is a solution to a unique problem. An alternative might be to provide free living-away-from-home facilities, just as governments provide free school facilities for the majority of children so that none may be precluded from schooling because of the financial circumstances of the family.

6.7 Compensation for disadvantage arising from distance from school should not be conditional upon the private financial capacity or willingness of parents. It might be argued that such a provision would provide financial assistance to some families for whom the costs of education, at whatever level, would not be prohibitive. In the survey a group of recipients of AIC allowances were identified whose incomes were in the upper quartile of national taxable incomes. For them it might be argued that a means test would be appropriate in relation to the basic boarding allowances.

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2. *Schools in Australia*. Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, May 1973 (P. Karmel, Chairman). Canberra: AGPS, 1973, para 2.7, p.11.

6.8 However, this cannot be sustained if the principle that all Australian children should have access free of charge to a government school is upheld. To insist upon it would be to argue that access to public schooling should be subject to compulsory charges alleviated only by means tests. An isolated parent should be able to send his or her child to a government school and be subject to much the same costs as if he lived in a city. Where individuals exercise the free choice of enrolling at non-government schools they should do so at additional cost to themselves or have their choice supported by other programs of State and Commonwealth assistance to non-government schools. The AIC boarding allowance does not and is not intended to facilitate choice between government and non-government schools. Of course, such a position does not cover the very difficult circumstances of those families identified in the survey who have no choice but to send their children to non-government boarding schools, and yet who receive boarding allowances from State and Commonwealth Governments which only partially meet boarding costs and make no contribution at all to often high tuition fees. These are a significant and neglected group for whom the present AIC Scheme offers little cover.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

the basic boarding allowance should be free of means test.

Additional Allowances for those with Special Needs

6.9 For those on low incomes, and this represents a significant proportion of the AIC recipients who responded to the questionnaire, costs additional to those reimbursed by the Basic Boarding Allowance create greater hardship than for others. In these cases, additional financial assistance is justified. It is available, on a means-tested basis, for the general student population in the final two years of secondary schooling. Under the Commonwealth Secondary Allowance Scheme (SAS), financial assistance is provided for those students who might be unable to complete their secondary schooling, or whose continuance at school might impose hardship because of family financial circumstance. It recognises that, in spite of the comprehensive provision of facilities and services by governments, there is still need for private expenditure for books, clothing, and incidental but unavoidable costs. In 1981 the SAS provides for a maximum allowance of $660 for each eligible child where the adjusted family income is $7,440 or less.

6.10 In the case of low income families living in isolated areas the additional costs to be met out of private expenditure include particular costs resulting from maintaining a child away from home, as well as the general incidental costs borne by all families irrespective of the location of their homes. When more than one child has to leave home to attend school the private costs increase directly according to the number of children concerned. That is, if a family has two children away at school the costs are doubled, three children and the costs

are trebled, and so on. Evidence from the *Household Expenditure Survey 1975-76* conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicated that the cost-per-child of maintaining them at home diminishes as the number of children increases.[3] In the case of children living away from home, however, costs cannot be absorbed into general household expenditure since the payment is for services to the child (for example, costs of board and travel) and must necessarily be a cost per unit. This is of particular importance in considering families on low incomes and on fixed incomes who do not have recourse to other finances to pay for their children's education.

6.11 These additional costs should be taken into account in calculating measures of general financial assistance. Whereas the Secondary Allowances Scheme is oriented towards the upper-secondary school, the Isolated Children Scheme caters for the whole range of schooling. Financial hardship occasioned by the costs of maintaining children away from home is not peculiar to the final two years of secondary school. Therefore, additional financial assistance should be payable in respect of primary and secondary students where it can be demonstrated that the disposable family income is inadequate.

6.12 It is appropriate that this assistance should be means-tested with emphasis on private family incomes. The first level of allowances, the basic boarding allowance, is to support access to schools; the second is to alleviate economic hardship. It is particularly important that a scheme of allowances which seeks to provide access to schooling for isolated children recognises that there will be some families who must board their children away from home who cannot find the cash necessary to meet what would be regarded as the cost of keeping the child at home. For these poor or 'cashless' families, additional boarding allowances are essential. They should be graduated according to relative need and the numbers of children per family. The additional financial assistance should be means-tested according to family income.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

(i) an additional boarding allowance be available to those who can demonstrate that the cost of living away from home imposes major financial hardship;

(ii) in calculating the need for such assistance, private family income should be considered;

(iii) the level of allowances should be sufficient in cases of greatest need to alleviate all of the costs of children living away from home.

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3. Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Household Expenditure Survey 1975-76*, Canberra: ABS, 1978 catalogue No. 6516.0.

Rationalising the AIC Scheme

6.13 The existing AIC Scheme provides for three categories of allowances. When it was first introduced, consideration was given to either a basic allowance free of means test plus an additional means-tested allowance, or a single means-tested allowance. The operation of the present three tiered scheme has proved unweildy. It has made necessary a more complex set of detailed regulations and administrative procedures for determining eligibility than is desirable. In the program of interviews for the survey it was found that the resultant complexity of the scheme has caused much concern to those for whom it was intended to assist. Many people were either confused or intimidated by the complexity of the scheme. A summary of views presented by parents and others associated with the scheme is as follows:

- the different concessions allowed in the Special Supplementary Allowance (the 'sibling concession') and the Additional Boarding Allowance meant that some found themselves eligible for the former, but not the latter, even though the marginal adjusted family income for the Special Supplementary Allowance is considerably less (in 1980, $6,200 as against $9,400);

- the detailed regulations relating to the means-tested-entitlements are so complex that many persons who might otherwise be eligible are deterred from applying. It is common practice to refer applications to an accountant. Many parents said that without an accountant they simply could not have submitted the forms;

- the information booklet distributed in association with the scheme is very difficult for many parents to follow. Many parents have to seek out people living in their district who are informed about the scheme to advise them and to help in their applications;

- school principals or teachers in local areas are ill-informed about the scheme. Very few have sufficient knowledge to be able to advise parents;

- because State and Commonwealth schemes operate concurrently, some parents cannot distinguish between the two and do not know for which they have applied or, because different regulations operate, do not know for which they qualify;

- because of the seasonal variability of farm incomes and incomes for those engaged in farm related industries (such as contract workers whose income may depend on seasonal conditions), and the regulations relating to adjusted family incomes, there is little certainty about eligibility from year to year. Forward planning is difficult and undue concern is generated about future ability to meet the costs of schooling.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

(i) the scheme be rationalised;

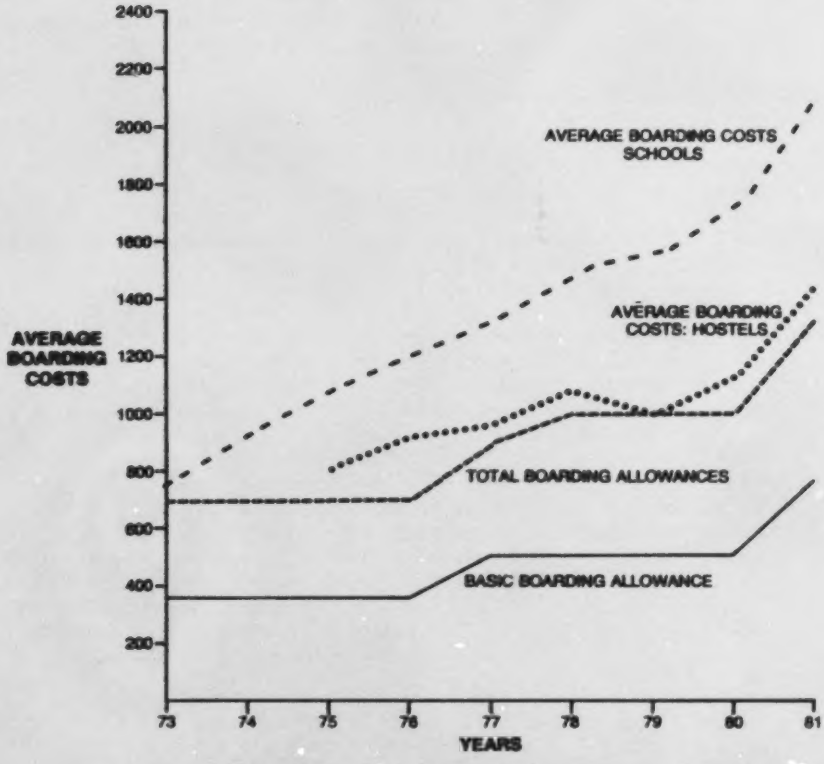
(ii) the allowances be reduced to two, a boarding allowance and an additional allowance;

(iii) the regulations for eligibility and the application procedures be modified and simplified.

The Level of Benefits for the Boarding Allowance

6.14 The level of the means-test-free allowance granted in 1973 assumed that parents would contribute at least the equivalent of the cost of supporting their children if they lived at home and attended school on a daily basis. The amount allowed represented the difference between the average costs at boarding schools and hostels and the estimated cost of maintaining a child at home. Since that time boarding fees have increased annually, but the Basic Boarding Allowance has been increased twice only : from $350 p.a. to $500 p.a. in 1977 and to $780 p.a. in 1981. Movements in average boarding costs and allowances are illustrated in Figure 6.1. It reveals an increasing gap between costs and allowances.

FIGURE 6:1 MOVEMENTS IN AVERAGE BOARDING COSTS AND AIC ALLOWANCES 1973 to 1981



N.B. AVERAGE BOARDING COSTS 1974 NOT AVAILABLE, 1981 ESTIMATES

6.15 Given that the boarding allowance is intended to enable isolated children to attend schools on the same terms as their town or city counterparts and general acceptance by parents that they should contribute to the maintenance of their children at the levels that would be required if the children lived at home, the formula devised in 1972 at the initiation of the AIC Scheme is a reasonable one. However, it has four problems: costs of living vary in different geographic locations; costs of board vary between States, between boarding schools and hostels, and among institutions within States; the relativity between costs and movements in allowances has not been maintained; and maintenance costs vary between primary and secondary school age children.

6.16 That the cost of living varies among regions is implicit in the taxation zone rebate scheme. It does not seem appropriate that educational allowances should attempt to compensate for those cost differentials. They should be more effectively catered for in wage and salary determinations and in income tax provisions. Therefore, on balance, it is suggested that the formula for calculating the boarding allowance should consider the most reliable national estimate of household costs for a child living at home. In making this recommendation, it is recognised that families with very low or non-existent taxable incomes and/or who are not subject to wage and salary determinations may not be protected fully by such national estimates which do not reflect local variations.

6.17 It is appropriate that differential costs of board be taken into account. The data for 1980 summarised in Table 6.1 illustrate the interstate differences and ranges in costs of board. The cost differentials relate strongly to recurrent resource expenditure by the boarding institutions themselves, that is, the recurrent costs of maintenance, staff and services, Government assistance to the institutions is only a marginal factor, except for hostels in Tasmania where substantial costs are borne by the State Government.

6.18 Because there is a marked range of fees charged for board between and within States, any Commonwealth scheme which provides allowances based on the average will unavoidably discriminate against one group in the population and in favour of another. However, alternatives are not easy to devise. A scheme based upon reimbursement of actual boarding expenses would involve costly administrative machinery. It would be necessary for boarding schools, hostels, private boarding houses etc. to justify their costs. Parents might be required to justify why they chose one form of board over another. It would be possible for a Commonwealth scheme to make different levels of payments for different States and between different types of institutions (as in the case of the present per capita grants scheme for non-government schools). However, on balance, it seems best to adhere to the present uniform system of payments.

TABLE 6.1

AVERAGE BOARDING CHARGES IN A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF BOARDING SCHOOLS AND HOSTELS BY STATE, 1980

State	Boarding Schools		Hostels	
	Range	Average	Range	Average
New South Wales	$1,170 - 3,273	$1,779	$1,455 - 1,899	$1,728
Victoria	200 - 2,373	1,768	500 - 504	502
Queensland	1,170 - 1,770	1,513	840 - 1,605	1,172
South Australia	1,560 - 2,880	2,063	718 - 1,722	1,061
Western Australia	1,200 - 1,890	1,553	details not available	1,800
Tasmania	855 - 2,200	1,530	$1,036 - 1,080	1,053
All States		$1,701		$1,219

Source: Commonwealth Department of Education, Canberra

6.19 The alternatives of a cost-average formula and a sliding scale of allowances resolve themselves into a choice between simplicity of administration and parity between costs and allowances. Simplification and adjustment of the level of allowances to more realistic levels are prior objectives. Therefore, even with the qualification that some discrimination, both positive and negative is unavoidable, the average cost of board is the more functional proposition.

6.20 The third difficulty with the existing Basic Boarding Allowance is that they have progressively fallen behind actual costs. The result has been that successive Commonwealth Governments have allowed inflation to erode the AIC Scheme to the point where the Basic Boarding Allowance is well short of meeting its original objective of offsetting the difference between the normal cost to a family of a child living at home and the additional boarding costs associated with living away. The erosion by inflation of the Basic Boarding Allowance has not only meant consistent failure to meet the objectives of the AIC Scheme. It has created constant uncertainties for isolated families as to its future value and has caused considerable financial difficulties for some of them. If financial hardship is to be minimised, it is essential that the boarding allowance be indexed against cost movements. The calculation of allowances should be based upon an index of boarding school, hostel and private board charges and an index of household expenditure per school child adjusted annually against the consumer price index.

6.21 The fourth issue, the variation in boarding costs between children of different ages is not a major problem because the overwhelming majority of isolated students who live away from home attend secondary schools. On balance, it seems most appropriate to calculate costs, and allowance entitlements, on the basis of the difference between the average cost of maintaining a secondary school child at home and away. Although several States weight their allowances on the basis of different payments for different levels of schooling (see Chapter 1), these divisions seem fairly artificial. A uniform allowance, besides being simple to understand and administer, would provide much the same levels of support to isolated families as a multi-level scheme, and would be much easier to adjust to changing circumstances.

6.22 For 1981, it is estimated that the average cost of maintaining a student at home is $1,160. The average cost of board at a boarding school or hostel is $2,290. Therefore the basic amount in boarding allowances which should have been received by isolated parents for each child in 1981 was $1,130, if the original intentions of the AIC Scheme were to be attained. In practice, with a Commonwealth allowance of $780 in 1981 and State allowances of $170 in New South Wales (with means test), $30 in Victoria, up to $500 in Queensland, $500 in South Australia, $250 in Western Australia and up to $450 in Northern Territory (see Chapter 1), there was uneven provision across the States. In Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory isolated parents were in receipt of combined basic allowances, free of means test, which met the original AIC targets. For the majority of isolated parents, total amounts for basic allowances fell well short of the targets.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

(i) the boarding allowance should be the difference between the average of boarding fees charged by boarding schools and hostels and the estimated cost of maintaining a child at home;

(ii) the boarding allowance should be based upon a figure of $1,130 for 1981;

(iii) it should be indexed against cost movements for home maintenance of children and boarding charges.

The Level of Benefits for the Additional Allowance

6.23 For parents on low or non-existent incomes the payment of additional costs after the boarding allowance has been reimbursed can cause special hardship. In the existing scheme they are entitled to further assistance under the Additional Boarding Allowance and Special Supplementary Allowance provisions. In 1981 the maximum amounts for which they might qualify from the Commonwealth (including the basic allowance of

$780) are $2,040 for a secondary student, $1,920 for a junior secondary student, and $1,740 for a primary pupil, if the adjusted family income is less than $7,440 and if the actual costs of board per child exceed the $600 allocated in the Additional Boarding Allowance (see Chapter 1).

6.24 The degree of financial hardship experienced is a function of costs incurred in proportion to disposable family income. The real costs are not restricted to fees charged for board, but include incidental but unavoidable costs for items such as clothing, linen, entertainment and sport, extra-curricular activities of the school or hostel, and travel to and from home at least three times a year. They increase directly as the number of children at school away from home increases and can be compounded when there are children in tertiary education who are wholly or partially supported by the parents. Disposable family income from which the total real costs of education must be met is not adequately measured by net income. It is obviously affected by the commitments of maintaining the family home (for items such as rent, mortgage servicing, land taxes, fuel, and so on) and the number of dependent children in the family.

6.25 Some of these factors are provided for in the existing scheme of allowances, others are not. For example, incidental costs of schooling are not provided for other than in the Special Supplementary Allowance. That is intended as a supplement of family income rather than a direct payment for education. Because the incidental costs are real education costs they are more appropriately accounted for in the boarding allowance. Costs of travel, which have grown significantly since the inception of the scheme, are excluded.

6.26 Those elements currently provided for include an allowable deduction for the other dependent children when calculating adjusted family incomes. The sibling concessional abatement rate in the Special Supplementary Allowance accounts for the number of children who are eligible for assistance under the AIC Scheme. Both of these are included in the other student assistance schemes of the Commonwealth. It is desirable that there be uniformity of provision in Commonwealth policies for financial assistance and, for this reason, if for no other, these two concessions should be retained in any revision of the AIC Scheme. Since the total real costs are so strongly influenced by the number of children away from home, there is an equally strong justification for retaining the sibling concessional allowance in any revised scheme.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

(i) the additional allowance be calculated so that it provides for the difference between the average cost of board and the boarding allowance; for 1981 the maximum of such an additional allowance would be $1,160;

(ii) it be indexed against cost movements in the same way as proposed for the boarding allowance.

Income Eligibility Levels

6.27 An important consideration in reviewing eligibility for access to the Additional Allowance is the Marginal Adjusted Family Income which is used and how that is derived. At present (1981) the Commonwealth uses different measures in its student allowance schemes. The MAFI for the Secondary Allowance Scheme and the Special Supplementary Allowance of the AIC Scheme are set at $7,440. That for the Tertiary Education Allowance Scheme and the Additional Boarding Allowance of the AIC Scheme is $10,312. For 1982 the two levels have been set at $8,482 and $11,034 respectively. (*Budget Statements 1981-82* Paper No. 1, p.82).

6.28 The adjusted family income is calculated on the incomes of both parents in the previous financial year. From the combined gross incomes deductions are made for each other dependent child in the family (at the rate of $450 per child), and amounts allowed as deductions by the Taxation Office under sections 51-52 of the Income Tax Assessment Act. The marginal income is based on a percentage of the average weekly income, adjusted annually according to shifts in that income. In effect, the levels of income for assessing eligibility have been derived from arbitrary proportions of the annual percentage changes in annual weekly incomes.

6.29 There is need for some rationale and consistency in those calculations. Three criteria of need were suggested by N.J. Thomson in *Schemes of Assistance to School Students, The Means Test* (a Report to the Australian Minister for Education, April 1975). They were : need as defined by Social Security Proverty Line Recommendations Support; need as defined by the Arbitration Commission for the minimum wage; and need as a weighted average of award wages paid to the work force. Each has merit. The current MAFI levels at the lower range approximate Henderson Poverty Line equivalents (56.5 per cent of Average Weekly Income); the upper level represents a weighted percentage of the average weekly income.

6.30 Since the upper level is the one which operates in the existing Additional Boarding Allowance, this is the level proposed for the revised Additional Allowance. It has the advantage of consistency with the TEAS Scheme, but the disadvantage of arbitrariness. However, given the average cost of board, it is a reasonable sum. Those with incomes less than that amount and supporting children living away from home at an average cost in excess of $2,000 per child would be very hard pressed to meet educational costs and maintain a household. There was widespread evidence in the survey that many isolated families, especially those facing tuition fees in addition to

boarding fees, with two or more children living away from home to attend school, found current MAFI eligibility levels for additional allowances too low. It is difficult to say what the appropriate level is, but no substantive justification can be found for setting a level lower than that for TEAS. Indeed, there is a strong case to be made for the argument that education costs to isolated parents for secondary school children living away from home are likely in many cases to substantially exceed the costs of maintaining young people at tertiary institutions.

6.31 Since education costs are met out of disposable family income, it is more appropriate to use taxable income rather than gross income as the base for assessing the AFI. While taxable income does not represent directly a family's disposable income, it is the most reliable and publicly accountable measure of recurrent private financial capacity. Since education costs for the majority are met from that source, it should be used in assessing eligibility for financial assistance. Data on taxable incomes are more reliable indicators of capacity to pay for services. Gross income can distort the apparent capacity.

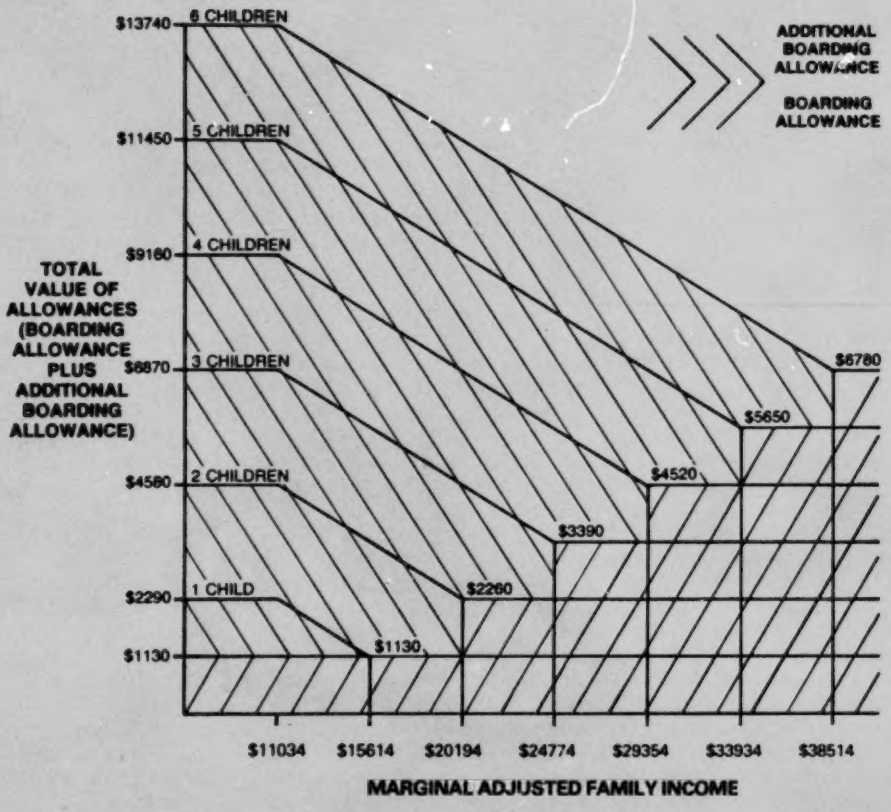
IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

(i) the Marginal Adjusted Family Income used for determining eligibility for the Additional Allowance under the revised AIC Scheme be the same as for the TEAS Scheme. This will be $11,034 in 1982;

(ii) the calculation of MAFI be based upon taxable incomes.

6.32 The proposal for revising the AIC Scheme by reducing the number of allowances to two, a means test free boarding allowance and an additional allowance means-tested against family income is represented diagramatically in Figure 6.2. Appendix E sets out in detail the calculations for each level of allowance recommended.

FIGURE 6.2 THE VALUE OF ALLOWANCES: COMBINED BOARDING AND ADDITIONAL BY M.A.F.I. AND NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN



Short Term Boarding Allowance

6.33 A review and analysis of this allowance, and consideration of parent and other perceptions of it, suggest that modifications are required to its scope and the amount paid. The existing provision allows the payment of $20 per week, free of means test, for students who live away from home for short periods for diagnosis and remediation of learning problems, or for diagnosis and treatment of psychological, emotional, or behavioural problems which inhibit school learning. The allowance is payable only if the special school or institution (or special class within a school) is controlled by a State Education Department or similar State authority. There is also a requirement that the referral for such treatment normally be a written recommendation of a State Education Department or non-government school guidance officer.

6.34 It seems somewhat anomalous that referrals should be restricted to guidance officers from government or non-government schools. Availability of such officers to isolated children is often very limited. Consideration should be given to extending the referral capacity to other qualified personnel. It also seems inappropriate that the specialist facilities and services in the non-government sector should not be available to isolated children who have short-term requirements. Presumably the restriction of the short-term boarding allowance to State institutions is a carryover from the general desire to ensure that the AIC Scheme does not facilitate the by-passing of government schools in country areas. While the latter aim, in the context of maintaining the viability of country schools, is justifiable, it cannot be supported in relation to the special orientation of the short-term boarding allowance.

6.35 Finally, the student who must live away from home for short periods for diagnosis and remediation because these are not available at his school or near his home, should receive a boarding allowance equivalent to that recommended for full-time boarders. Consideration of the particular costs and cost-savings of short-term board need to be accounted for. If there is not special accommodation provided, as at the Chidley Education Centre in Western Australia, for example, short-term boarding costs are normally higher than those of the boarding schools or hostels. On the other hand, some of the additional costs of full-time board do not have to be met. A reasonable amount payable for short-term board is the weekly equivalent of average costs at boarding schools and hostels. In 1981 prices the Short Term Boarding Allowance should have been $52 per week (that is, the average boarding cost of $2,090 divided by 40 weeks of the school year).

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

(i) the recommendation for diagnosis or remedial treatment to qualify for Short Term Boarding Allowances should be by an approved person;

(ii) the diagnosis and treatment may be undertaken at any approved appropriate school or institution in the government and non-government sectors;

(iii) the Short Term Boarding Allowance should be the weekly equivalent of average costs of board. For 1981 the allowance should be set at $52 per week, free of means test.

Second Home Allowance

6.36 The basic second home allowance is claimed by approximately 5 per cent of AIC recipients. While it is not a major aspect of the scheme it is an important one. It was suggested in the previous chapter that, under certain circumstances where the child needs home care not possible elsewhere, the second home enables that while also giving him or her daily access to an appropriate school. For some families it is the most economical way of providing access to schools. The Second Home Allowance and the Additional Second Home Allowance should continue under the existing conditions of eligibility.

6.37 The present basic second home allowance is for payments of $780 for one eligible child, $1,440 for two eligible children and $1,990 for 3 or more eligible children. Additional sums may be claimed up to the existing Basic Boarding Allowance per child according to demonstrated and approved costs incurred to maintain the home. In other words, there is a nexus between this allowance and the Basic Boarding Allowance.

6.38 The levels of the allowance are the equivalent of 100 per cent of the Basic Boarding Allowance for the first child, 85 per cent for the second, and 70 per cent for the third and subsequent children. Reference was made earlier to the absorption of initial costs in general household expenditure and a consequent reduction in the per capita costs of maintaining children at home. The more children in the family, the cheaper is the unit cost of maintaining them. It is reasonable therefore, that the proportionate levels of allowances be maintained.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

(i) the existing conditions of eligibility for a Second Home Allowance and Additional Second Home Allowance be maintained;

(ii) the level of allowance preserve the existing parity with the recommended Boarding Allowance. In 1981 prices, the levels of the Second Home Allowance should be, for one child $1,130, for two children $2,090, for three or more, $2,880.

Travel Costs and Distance Criteria

6.39 Costs of student travel between their homes and places of board intentionally were excluded from the AIC Scheme, even though it was seen, when the AIC Scheme began, as having high priority in affording isolated students access to schools. It was regarded as a State responsibility. Since that time the transportation of students has continued to be a major, and growing, concern of parents. In most of the States the assistance provided through free or subsidised travel on public trains or buses is inadequate. The reasons are not solely matters of cost. Even in Western Australia with a nominally liberal voucher scheme of free travel on the most appropriate public transport for the equivalent of three return trips each year, there are major geographic limitations on travel support. Students in the south-west of the State in the area bounded approximately by Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, and Esperance are excluded from the Subsidised Student Travel Scheme. That region contains the majority of the students in the State who are in receipt of AIC allowances, but within it the costs of travel at term vacations and 'boarders' weekends' are borne by parents.

6.40 While it is not the purpose of this review to draw comparisons between the policies or programs of the States, the subsidised student travel scheme in Western Australia at least approaches the consensus opinion when the AIC Scheme began that return travel costs between the isolated students' homes and appropriate institutions should be paid at least three times a year.

6.41 The evidence of the previous chapter showed that more than half of the surveyed students qualifying for boarding allowances returned home only once a term. For some of those students the distances involved, the unavailability of public transport services, or difficulties of access to those services render impractical travel home for short periods such as 'boarders' weekends' (usually of four days duration, including travelling time). For others, travel home is impossible because of cost. It is reasonable that every child should be able to go home at term vacations. The minimum expectation is that every child should be assisted with return passage three times a year.

6.42 The *Report on Education of Isolated School Children* by the Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts (July 1976) addressed itself to the issues of transport facilities and conveyance allowances. The Committee expressed its concern at the disparity between the various States in the regulations governing the payment of travelling allowances. It recommended:

"... that each State education department examine the disparities between the various State schemes of travel assistance for isolated school children with a view to rectifying anomalies in the schemes."[4]

6.43 That recommendation has not been taken up. The *Report of the Select Committee on Education in Queensland* recognised a similar need to assist isolated children, but given that resources are limited, observed that priorities should be established. That Committee recommended:

"6.8 That there is a need to liberalise the travel allowances paid to allow children to return home at weekends and school vacation and in particular that a more liberal attitude be taken to the subsidisation of air travel for these purposes."[5]

6.44 In other words, the priority afforded transportation of isolated students to school by Commonwealth and State officials in 1972 was reaffirmed by these reports in 1976 and 1980. It is reaffirmed here. Three problems need to be addressed: difficulties of access because of remoteness from regular public transport services, terrain and impassable roads, or climatic conditions; the increasing costs of travel; and the provision of bus services in the more closely settled regions.

6.45 The first two of these were discussed in Chapter 5. Those difficulties caused by geographic conditions and the economic non-viability of public transport services in sparsely populated areas are not easily resolved by a uniform financial provision for students. The voucher system adopted in Western Australia has merit, but it should be tenable for travel by road, air, or rail. All regions are not served by one or the other and isolated students should be assisted to travel by the most appropriate means. In some locations unique solutions might be required, such as charter aircraft (as in the case of ABSEG beneficiaries) or at certain times of the year. These matters need to be given urgent priority. If the Commonwealth were to raise AIC boarding allowances to the levels suggested in this review, the necessity for basic boarding allowances from State Governments would be much reduced. An appropriate redirection of State funds would be toward travel support for isolated children. In other words, a scheme whereby the States provided every isolated student with three-times-a-year travel support by bus, train or plane would be an appropriate offset for Commonwealth action in raising and standardising AIC allowances as set out in this review.

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4. Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts *Report on Education of Isolated School Children*, July 1976, Parliamentary Paper No. 296/1976, p. 45.

5. *Report of the Select Committee on Education in Queensland 1980*, Queensland Legislative Assemply. Fifth Interim Report "Isolated Children and Isolated Schools" p. 7.

6.46 The problems of families in closer-settled areas are less intractable, but those of cost, while smaller, are nonetheless real. The tension between eligibility for AIC allowances and access to a school bus service is acute in some areas. By regulation, those who live within 4.5 kilometres of transport to a government school are ineligible for AIC allowances. This is central to the purposes of the scheme. State Government provision of educational service and the Commonwealth's student assistance scheme are intended to be complementary and the AIC Scheme is not provided to enable children to by-pass a government school within reasonable daily access from their homes. However, where families living in close promimity compete for the provision of bus services and the exclusion of bus services because of different values afforded daily travel and board in a distant city or town, or different perceptions of the suitability or appropriateness of the education provided at the closest school (most often at a secondary level), social disharmony can arise.

6.47 This last problem has no easy solution. Regulations can do little to resolve issues which are essentially individual perceptions or values. At another level, universal provision of financial assistance will do little to resolve logistical problems of access which are direct consequences of climatic or other geographic conditions. Given the geographic diversity of the continent and th considerable differences between regions which influence the economics of providing adequate transport services, a program of student assistance directed from the centre will not satisfy the needs of some local conditions or resolve particular issues of each region. Transport is integral to education policies and services which are the legitimate province of State Governments and a Commonwealth financial presence through assistance to students can contribute only to the alleviation of individual costs. The central problems relating to access require local action for their resolution.

6.48 Attention was drawn previously to the opinion in the Senate Standing Committee's report that there were anomalies in the various schemes of travel assistance for isolated children. One is the differences in distance criteria of eligibility for assistance. Not only do the States differ among themselves (see Table 1.3), but the Commonwealth's regulations differ from those of the States. Considerable opinion was expressed in the current survey that the time limit of three hours per day and the distances to be travelled to school are excessive for some children. Attention was drawn to the physical strain upon very young children (5 and 6 year-olds in their first years at school) and older children who are contending with the time-consuming study requirements of preparing for matriculation examinations at the end of Year 12. It was suggested that the criteria for eligibility for boarding allowances or correspondence allowances might be liberalised to reduce the time and distances travelled by these children. A maximum of two hours per day was proposed (that is, the same as the time limit of the Remote Area Allowance in Queensland).

6.49 There is strong evidence to support this proposal. For some children the distances travelled to school are indeed excessive. However, liberalising the criteria of eligibility in this way raises vexing problems. In the first instance, suitable boarding accommodation is not available for very young children. Even if it were, the strong opposition of parents to having young children live away from home suggests that it would be taken up only as a last resort. If children cannot travel to school daily the only alternative is correspondence school. This is an alternative not wanted by many parents. A second problem is that of the threat to existing school bus services. If some children were to take advantage of boarding allowances the viability of some existing school bus routes would be threatened. This would deny transport to those who prefer to have their children travel to school daily. These are problems not easy to resolve, but require consideration by State authorities.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

(i) all children who qualify for AIC boarding allowances should also be eligible for assistance with travel. Vouchers tenable for travel by road, air, or rail should be introduced. All isolated children should be assisted for travel between home and school at least three times a year;

(ii) the Commonwealth negotiate with the States for the offsetting of increased AIC allowances by re-directing funds currently devoted to State allowances, as necessary, to such travel support.

Correspondence Allowance

6.50 The Correspondence Allowance was introduced as part of the AIC Scheme in January, 1973. It provided for a basic allowance of $200 and an additional amount of up to $100 reimbursable on the production of receipts. This remained unchanged until 1981 when a uniform payment of $500 was introduced.

6.51 The Correspondence Allowance is the second most important component of the AIC Scheme in terms of the number of children receiving assistance. The majority of these children are primary pupils. The complexity of the syllabus at secondary level makes secondary education by correspondence much less preferred than daily attendance at school. Certain parents, out of financial necessity or personal preference, do enrol their children for secondary correspondence, but the strong trend is for the majority at that level to live away from home.

6.52 Allowances in support of correspondence students might be directed at any one or each of the following obvious areas of need: lack of adequate facilities; lack of courses; lack of social contact; lack of a teacher. Each requires a

different form of assistance. Financial assistance might enable families to purchase or hire equipment and learning aids for correspondence pupils. Similarly, the major disadvantage of social isolation might be alleviated by providing assistance for board and travel costs for attendance at camp schools or decentralised correspondence schools. Inadequacies in courses require a different response, mainly co-operative evaluation and development of learning materials and instructional strategies for distance education.

6.53 Various approaches may be taken to compensate for lack of a teacher. These include the payment of an allowance to the parent who supervises correspondence lessons; the payment of an allowance for a governess or tutor; providing fares and accommodation for home supervisors to attend in-service training courses; and employing a network of itinerant teachers to visit homes and counsel children and home supervisors. When the AIC Scheme was introduced, these alternatives were considered. The first was questioned because educational gain would not necessarily follow from the payment of such an allowance, even though it was acknowledged that as a payment for services it might be some compensation to the mother for the time spent on her supervisory duties. The second was seen to have serious deficiencies in that, given the proposed level of correspondence allowances, comparatively few parents could take advantage of this type of assistance. Lower income families were not in a position to pay the difference between the subsidy and the cost of employing appropriate home supervisors. The fourth possibility was regarded as too expensive; the perceived benefits were thought to be possibly outweighed by the amount of time spent in travelling.

6.54 As it has been implemented in the AIC Scheme, the Basic Correspondence Allowance has been directed at providing a contribution towards costs incurred by parents of eligible children who were undertaking their full-time primary or secondary education through the Correspondence School or other appropriate sections of a State Department. The Policy Guidelines of the Commonwealth Department of Education with respect to the allowance are quite specific:

> "This allowance is intended to assist parents with the costs involved in purchasing textbooks, equipment and teaching aids, and, where applicable, to postage costs. It is also intended to defray the costs of travel to decentralised schools or School of the Air outings, where applicable."

6.55 The reimbursable items approved under the previously-existing Additional Correspondence Allowance are equally as clearly stated: reimbursement of costs incurred in employing a tutor or governess to supervise lessons or domestic help to free a parent to undertake that task; reimbursement of costs incurred for accommodation, tuition, or enrolment (but not travel costs) associated with a decentralised correspondence

school camp school, or other approved educational activity; reimbursement of accommodation costs incurred by attendance at in-service training courses for parent supervisors; and reimbursement of the cost of hiring or purchasing transceiver equipment, or purchasing parts for such equipment, to enable students to participate in School of the Air broadcasts. The combined amount of the basic allowance ($200) and the reimbursement allowance ($150) in 1973 was merely the equivalent of the then Basic Boarding Allowance. No valid explanation of this nexus between the two allowances has developed.

6.56 The revision of the Correspondence Allowance in January 1981 did not change the intended purpose of the Scheme. It is still seen as a contribution to incidental costs incurred. The scheme recognises that certain expenditure on physical items are necessary in homes where correspondence education is conducted. Such items include furniture for the establishment of a 'school room' (desk, chair, cupboards, etc.) and learning aids (encyclopaedias, tape recorders, globe, magazine subscriptions, and so on). Furthermore, it is acknowledged that accommodation costs of attending camp schools and other educational activities are essential extras which require financial support. It provides tacit recognition that a person is needed to act as home supervisor. The funds may be used as the home supervisor sees fit including the employment of home help to relieve a parent for duties of supervision, or to subsidise the wages of a governess or tutor.

6.57 Because increased resources have been provided directly by correspondence schools in the States the need for subsidised resources has diminished since the inception of the AIC Scheme. In the survey, widespread evidence was gathered that many of the original purposes for which the Correspondence Allowance was provided have been overtaken by the development of services for country children. For example, books, materials, implements, tapes etc. are provided free of charge by many Correspondence Schools to a point where little family expenditure on such items is required. Similarly, subsidised opportunities are provided in many areas, either through Correspondence School funds or Commonwealth Schools Commission program funds, for parents or children to attend camps, in-service conferences, special visits to city areas etc. Again, the drain on family incomes has been reduced. This is not to suggest that the present system of paying a $500 correspondence allowance is necessarily excessive or that all families receive the kinds of support from other sources that reduces their dependence on the allowance. However, it is true that many isolated families do not need the $500 per child to purchase the items and provide the travel which was envisaged when the scheme began. It is necessary to consider whether or not other justifications for the allowance exist. In this context, it became evident in the survey that the educational pressures on mothers accepting responsibility for correspondence education supervision have greatly increased since the AIC Scheme began, and that it is

appropriate to consider substantially shifting the rationale for the allowance from one which focuses on reimbursement for essential items of expenditure to a home supervisor's allowance.

6.58 Parents of children 'on correspondence' who were surveyed, emphasised that the largest single impediment they saw to their children's educational progress was lack of regular contact with a qualified teacher. This lack of a teacher is most effectively compensated for by dedicated and capable home supervision. The role of the home supervisor is of primary importance. Given that it is the essential component provided within the home for the effectiveness of correspondence education, can the Correspondence Allowance be regarded as legitimate reimbursement for those providing an essential educational service in the home?

6.59 In essence, this is what the Correspondence Allowance has become. Most parents appear to regard this as an appropriate rationale. They point out that some portion of the allowance is necessary to offset educational expenditure. For some families it contributes to the employment of an outside home supervisor (a governess or tutor). For others it assists with the employment of domestic help or the purchase of labour-saving devices which free the mother for correspondence supervision. For others still it is money used to finance some essential item of household expenditure. Many parents suggested that the Correspondence Allowance received for younger children was a vital contribution to the cash needed to pay the boarding and tuition fees of older children living away from home and attending school.

6.60 The conclusion drawn from the survey and consideration of the situation and demands of correspondence education was that the present allowance should be regarded as a Home Supervision Allowance. As such it should be payable irrespective of who performs the duties of supervisor. The reimbursement component of the previous Additional Correspondence Allowance was inequitable. The reimbursement of costs incurred in employing a governess or tutor or domestic help was a benefit to those who could afford such costs, but not to those who could not. To reintroduce such a condition on the allowance would be unjust. It is more appropriate to consider the allowance as a support for all children studying by correspondence who do not have constant daily access to a teacher in a school. Home supervision advances the educational opportunities of such children.

6.61 The amount which should be paid as a Home Supervision Allowance is problematical. The existing Correspondence Allowance, $500, is more than adequate for the purchase of teaching and learning aids and equipment, (apart from the purchase of major capital items such as home video units). It may not be an adequate amount as reimbursement for home supervision. If it is used to subsidise the employment of a home supervisor or home help, it certainly is insufficient.

6.62 Three alternatives are presented for consideration. First, that the Home Supervision Allowance be maintained at the level of the Boarding Allowance. Second, that it be calculated on the equivalent cost of employing a home supervisor. Third, that it be calculated at an equivalent cost of supervising a child at school, that is the per capita cost of providing a teacher aide in a government school.

6.63 If the original (1972) nexus between the Boarding Allowance and the Home Supervision Allowance was to be maintained, the value (in 1981 prices) would be $1,030. The rationale for such a nexus is difficult to argue since the two allowances are directed at different ends. The Boarding Allowance is intended to defray some of the costs incurred in boarding a child away from home so that he or she may attend school. The Home Supervision Allowance is intended to support the provision of services which supplement those provided through Correspondence Schools.

6.64 The second alternative, that of linking the allowance with the cost of employing a home supervisor or home help would require an allowance of between $3,200 and $6,000 paid over a 40 week school year. This figure is based upon the salaries which are currently being paid by parents for tutors or governesses. The salary range of $80-150 per week does not take account of the cost of boarding and lodging for the home supervisor. These are normal costs met by the employer. Even if an award wage were established as the basis for such an allowance, the major criticism of a 'Governess Allowance' considered previously would hold. That is, the allowance would only be of direct educational value to the children of those families who could afford the additional costs of board and lodging and who had facilities in their homes or on their properties to lodge the home supervisor. In addition, as the survey revealed, many families who might find it possible to employ a home supervisor, simply cannot obtain the services of such people. The difficulty of attracting such people to isolated locations, and holding them there, is chronic.

6.65 The third possibility, that the level of the allowance should be equal to the cost per child of, say, a teacher aide in a government school is difficult to calculate because of the fact that correspondence students are already heavily supported in State government educational allocations, and the disaggregation of the 'teacher aide' component is likely to be very complicated. In 1982 'outturn' prices, the Commonwealth Schools Commission estimated that average per capita recurrent expenditure for government schools will be $1,480 per primary student and $2,402 per secondary student. Presumably, after allowing a discount for the costs of operating correspondence schools etc., and taking into account the teacher aide salary component of educating a child in a typical government school, some calculation could be made about an appropriate Home Supervision Allowance.

6.66 In the end, although the conclusion was reached that a Home Supervision Allowance should be payable, no specific funding rationale was adopted as a result of this review. It seems appropriate, for the present, to retain the allowance at the present level of $500. It also seems appropriate that the Home Supervision Allowance should be payable at the same nominal rate irrespective of whether a child is enrolled in pre-school, primary or secondary correspondence school. However, it should be paid at a rate according to the time spent on lessons each day. Thus, where a primary school student or secondary school student is enrolled full-time, the mother should qualify for the full value of home supervision allowances if all lesson requirements of the correspondence school are met. For the pre-school child, classes are usually planned for the equivalent of half the normal school day. If this is the case, the Home Supervision Allowance payable for pre-school pupils should be half the standard rate.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

(i) a Home Supervision Allowance be payable to families for all children enrolled in a correspondence school. It should be set at the same nominal level and be available for pre-school, primary and secondary correspondence education, but the amount payable should be calculated at a pro-rata basis according to the portion of the normal school day expected to be devoted to lessons;

(ii) the initial level of payment of the Home Supervision Allowance should be the present Correspondence Allowance of $500 per child (in 1981);

(iii) the Home Supervision Allowance should be adjusted annually in relation to movements in teacher aide wages and salaries.

The Administration of the AIC Scheme

6.67 Two problems requiring immediate action in the administration of the scheme are the dissemination of information and the procedures for application. These two were identified as major sources of concern among the existing recipients of the scheme. It was widely suggested that significant numbers of parents who would be eligible for benefits under the scheme do not apply for full entitlements of additional assistance because they are similarly confused.

6.68 To remedy the problems related to procedures for application it is recommended that the initial application form be simplified and that applicants whose children qualify for second and subsequent years be not requested to duplicate information already collected from them. The existing application form in two parts requests information under twelve sections with some seventy-five categories of data. To many people the form (AIC Form I) is intimidating. A suggested revised application form which has been reduced to essential information is presented in Appendix D.

6.69 Much of the information provided in the initial application is stored by the regional offices of the Commonwealth Department of Education. It is not necessary, therefore, for families to supply the same information in subsequent years. Existing procedures for data storage and retrieval provide access to information if it is required. From the point of view of applicants, the duplication of information each year is irksome and often difficult. If it is unnecessary it should not be requested. To simplify the procedure a suggested revised application form for use in second and subsequent years is also included in Appendix D.

6.70 Because there are difficulties in disseminating information about the scheme in remote areas, it is recommended that application forms and information booklets be available at country primary schools, boarding schools and hostels. When asked whether they would assist in this way, school principals were very supportive of the proposal. This would mean that when parents of country children were given enrolment forms they would receive from the school or hostel information and application forms for AIC allowances. The same might reasonably apply to assistance for travel or board available from State Government aurhorities. Indeed, there is a strong case for greater co-ordination and co-operation between Commonwealth and State authorities in providing information to isolated families about benefits available from both levels of government.

6.71 Finally, there is need for an extensive education program to inform country people about educational opportunities. Those media which the urban dweller takes for granted, the daily newspaper, the radio and television, are not as evident in

sparsely populated areas, Radio is the major medium of communication. Otherwise information is disseminated by word of mouth. It is not practicable, therefore, to recommend that more information be available through press, radio and television. Neither is the information needed only that related to financial assistance. More extensive information about educational resources, access, costs, courses, and so on should be made available so that parents and children can make more informed choices. There is need for new strategies for information dissemination to be developed.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

(i) the initial application form be simplified;

(ii) for the second and subsequent years less information be requested from applicants;

(iii) application forms and information booklets be made systematically available to country schools, boarding schools and hostels for distribution to parents of students from country areas;

(iv) there be much greater co-ordination of Commonwealth and State advice to isolated parents about benefits available for isolated children;

(v) investigation be made of new ways to provide more information about educational opportunities for isolated children.

CHAPTER 7 HANDICAPPED CHILDREN AND AIC SCHEME BENEFITS

7.1 Although the AIC Scheme was established with the primary aim of assisting parents with children living in geographically isolated areas, provision was made from the beginning to assist handicapped children who had to live away from home to attend special schools, regardless of their distances from the nearest appropriate school. For the purposes of assessing eligibility handicapped children were deemed to be those who;

- were unable to attend normal schools and had been accepted into institutions which catered for their handicaps; and

- were able to attend normal schools, but because of their disabilities required access to special educational facilities, part-time attendance at special centres, visits from specialist teachers, or special facilities to enable them to attend classes full-time.

7.2 In general, eligibility was limited to those with physical or mental handicaps, but who were undertaking recognised programs of primary or secondary studies. Children whose handicaps were such that they were permanently institutionalised or hospitalised were not eligible. The criterion of 'permanence' was that the child did not normally return home for holidays.

7.3 Subsequent extensions of the conditions of eligibility broadened the scope of the provisions;

- In June 1973 the Commonwealth decided that such children who were benefitting from any form of training designed to fit them to take their place in the family or in the community would be eligible for boarding allowances.

- At the end of 1974 the correspondence allowance was made payable for children who lived at home and studied by correspondence because a mental or physical handicap prevented them from attending school daily. Students with a medical condition were also deemed eligible for correspondence allowances.

- In mid 1975, in recognition of the discrimination against children who were capable of home visits but were prevented from doing so because of family circumstances (for example, a single parent), the criterion of permanent institutionalisation was waived.

- At the beginning of 1975 pre-school children were deemed eligible provided that they were boarding away from home to attend an institution for the handicapped.

- In February 1975 students between the ages of 16 and 21 in receipt of invalid or blind pensions were included in the scheme if they boarded away from home to undertake full-time schooling at primary or secondary level. In 1976 non-pensioners over the age of 16 who had not previously been in the workforce were deemed to be eligible up to the age of 21, subject only to the same conditions as handicapped children under 16.

- Benefits were paid in 1974 to parents of a number of asthmatic children boarding away from home in Western Australia to attend special schools at New Norcia and Kellerberrin. In May 1975 the Minister approved the inclusion from the beginning of 1976 students who boarded away from home for medical reasons. Following advice that funds would not be available to broaden the scheme in this way in the 1975-76 financial year, that decision lapsed. Those students already approved retained their eligibility as special cases.

- From the beginning of 1981 the 'Handicapped Children' category was changed to 'Children with Disabilities'. For the purposes of eligibility a 'disability' was defined as a physical or intellectual handicap, a psychological, emotional or behavioural problem, or a medical condition.

7.4 These progressive changes in the scheme were contrary to the recommendations of a working party of Commonwealth and State officials which met to review the scheme in 1974. They considered that in view of other developments in this field (including the provisions for special education through the Commonwealth Schools Commission, benefits payable through the Department of Social Security and the Department of Health, and the benefits and services provided by State Governments) handicapped children should be seen as falling outside the scope of the Isolated Children's Scheme. It was recommended that the total provisions for these children should be re-examined with a view to co-ordinating the various forms of assistance. In the long-term a separate scheme of assistance for the handicapped should be created which will take into account all forms of assistance from government and other sources. In the interim, handicapped children should continue to be eligible for AIC allowances.

7.5 Such a comprehensive review has not been undertaken. It is not within the scope of this review to consider the full range of public policies, services, and benefits provided for children with disabilities. Because it is an important component of the AIC Scheme, however, evidence gathered in the Perth/Sydney metropolitan questionnaire and interview survey is considered in this chapter.

Some Characteristics of Handicapped Children

7.6 The Perth/Sydney metropolitan populations were surveyed on the assumption that a significant portion of the children in those areas were eligible because they suffered disabilities. The data summarised in Table 7.1 sets out the grounds for assistance among those AIC Scheme beneficiaries who responded to the survey.

TABLE 7.1

GROUNDS UNDER WHICH CHILDREN WERE ELIGIBLE FOR AIC ALLOWANCES

Grounds for Assistance	W.A. Rural	Queensland Rural	Perth/Sydney Metropolitan
Geographic isolation (a)	955	1655	56
Handicapped and Living away from Home	41	93	196
Handicapped and Studying by Correspondence	3	13	3
Special Courses (b)	196	138	4
Others	49	130	12
Total	1244	2029	271

(a) includes categories 1-4 of grounds for assistance enumerated in the questionnaire (see Appendix A and Table 4.1 p.54)

(b) includes categories 8-10 of grounds for assistance (see Table 4.1 p. 54)

Note: Percentages have not been calculated because of the large number of multiple responses. The valid sample sizes for Queensland, Western Australia and Perth/Sydney metropolitan were 1231, 862 and 243 respectively

7.7 Of the 56 in the metropolitan areas who were categorised as geographically isolated, a significant number resided in a second home. That is, their family homes were in rural areas, but the second homes maintained so that they could attend school were in the metropolitan areas. They were included in the sample because the addresses contained in Commonwealth Department of Education records for payment of allowances were those of the second homes. Another group in this category were children from the metropolitan areas who attended agricultural schools in the country and qualified for boarding allowances.

7.8 For the purposes of this chapter the more important groups were those identified as handicapped. One hundred and six in the Queensland rural, 44 in the Western Australian rural, and 199 in the Perth/Sydney metropolitan samples were identified as

eligible on these grounds. Further analysis of the data from the 243 responses in the metropolitan areas survey revealed that there were 214 children in the sample who were handicapped.

7.9 Of the 214 children of the metropolitan families who responded to the questionnaire, most had more than one handicap. Almost one-third were intellectually handicapped, one in five had physical handicap of sight, hearing or mobility, and slightly more than one quarter of the sample had a handicap relating to speech and language. Table 7.2 indicates that 21 per cent of the sample had toilet and eating-related problems. Many of these necessitated extensive care.

TABLE 7.2

NATURE OF HANDICAP

Handicap	Number	Percent
Toilet	66	12
Eating	50	9
Mobility	43	8
Speech	93	18
Language defect	48	9
Hearing	19	4
Sight	45	8
Intellectual	171	32
Total	535	100

Note: Most of the 214 children had more than 1 handicap

7.10 The medical conditions associated with those handicaps were numerous. They included Down's Syndrome, Spina bifida, muscular dystrophy and cerebral palsy. Additional information provided in questionnaire responses indicated the range of medical conditions. They are listed in Table 7.3

TABLE 7.3

THE NATURE OF DISABILITIES OF CHILDREN QUALIFYING FOR AIC ALLOWANCES - PERTH/SYDNEY

Severely handicapped/Multiple handicapped	20
Down's Syndrome	19
Moderately retarded	16
Mentally retarded	8
Spastic	7
Epileptic	4
Cerebral palsy	4
Training in personal habits/social behaviour	3
Autistic	3
Deaf	3
Blind	3
Can't walk unaided	2
Spina bifida	2
Muscular dystrophy	2
Receives remedial education	1
Eroniostenosis	1
Prader Willi Syndrome	1
Homociptinurea	1
Agenisis	1
Hyperactive	1
Granular pharynbitis	1
Heart condition	1

Ninety-five responses given to this question, (See Appendix A for a copy of the questionnaire).

7.11 Other information from case studies from the interview program indicates some of the combinations of disabilities of multiple-handicapped children;

Donna (age 5):

Down's Syndrome and hole in the heart. Severe speech disability, moderate disability in mobility and manipulation. Intellectually handicapped.

Belinda (age 7):

Microcephalic
Severe disability sight, speech, mobility, manipulation
Intellectually handicapped.

Danny (age 14):

Blind. Severe disability speech, mobility, motor control
Intellectually handicapped.

Teena (age 13):

Encephalitis as an infant
Profoundly retarded, severely epileptic.

James (age 7):

Cerebral palsy and encephalitis at age 3 months, Severe disability speech, mobility, manipulation, Moderate disability hearing and epilepsy
Intellectually handicapped.

Linda (age 9):

Cerebral palsy following intraventricular haemorrhage.
Profoundly retarded with severe spastic quadraplegia, central blindness, deafness and epilepsy.

Michael (age 8):

Spastic
Severe disability speech, mobility, manipulation, Epileptic
Intellectually handicapped.

Brendan (age 7):

Mentally retarded and blind
Severe disability speech, mobility, manipulation.

Jamie (age 16):

Spina bifida
Severe bowel and bladder problems.

Richard (age 16):

Blind, deaf and retarded
Handicaps the result of mother contracting ruebella during her pregnancy.

7.12 All of these children in case studies had multiple handicaps. They do not represent the full range of children with disabilities. Others do not require the same extensive care in residential institutions, but because of physical or intellectual disability must live away from home for their education or training. Of the 214 children in the metropolitan samples, 10 per cent were in the normal school year for their age.

TABLE 7.3A

YEAR OF SCHOOLING BY AGE

School year	Number	Percent
Normal	21	9.8
Not normal	80	37.4
Ungraded	110	51.4
No response	3	1.4
Total	214	100.0

7.13 Only 4 children studied at home by correspondence. The largest number attended special schools or training centres, while the remainder attended schools for the physically handicapped (deaf, blind, spastic) or attended normal schools which had facilities or services (such as a nursing sister) which enabled them to cater for children with handicaps.

TABLE 7.4

TYPE OF SCHOOLING

	Number	Percent
Correspondence	4	1.9
Special Day School	122	57.0
Training Centre	37	17.3
Other	41	19.1
No response	10	4.7
Total	214	100.0

Financial Assistance for Handicapped Children

7.14 All of the children identified in the sample qualified for AIC allowances. Some received payments from other sources, public and private. The numbers of children who qualified for other financial assistance are summarised in Table 7.5

TABLE 7.5

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER SOURCES

	Number	Percent
None or 'no response'	63	29,4
Invalid pension	23	10,8
Commonwealth Handicapped Child's Allowance	88	41,1
Other Government assistance	35	16,4
Other private assistance	5	2,3
Total	214	100,0

7.15 Apart from invalid pensions payable to those 16 years of age and over, the other Commonwealth assistance available as direct payments for handicapped children is the Handicapped Child's Allowance. This may be paid to the parent or guardians of a mentally or physically handicapped child living at home and requiring constant, or almost constant, care and attention. The child must be under 16, or a full-time student aged 16 to 24 who is not receiving an invalid pension.

7.16 The Commonwealth payment for a 'severely' handicapped child or student is $65 a month. It is paid free of means test and is not subject to taxation. For 'substantially' handicapped children or students the allowance is payable wholly or in part if it can be demonstrated that, because of the child's handicap, the parent or guardian suffers major financial hardship. Generally, students who qualify for AIC allowances because they live away from home for education or training are disqualified from the Handicapped Child's Allowance.

7.17 State Government allowances for handicapped children who live away from home are as follows:

New South Wales

Special Allowance for Secondary Pupils required to Board - available where ill-health necessitates boarding, $173 p.a. (subject to means test).

Queensland

Special School Scholar Allowance - $54 p.a. for students living at home and $222 for students living away from home (subject to means test).

Private Accommodation Scheme for Handicapped Children - for children up to 12 years of age $25 per week and for children 12 and over $27 per week.

South Australia

Special School Remote Area Allowance - paid to parents of students who, due to remoteness, are compelled to board away from home to attend a special school, $320 p.a. up to and including age 12; $400 p.a. for students 13 and over (subject to means test).

Northern Territory

Handicapped Children's Boarding Allowance - supplementary to AIC Boarding Allowance or Second Home Allowance; years 1 to 5, $150 p.a.; years 6 to 7, $290 p.a.; years 8 to 10, $360 p.a.; years 11 to 12, $450 p.a. (not subject to means test).

7.18 Three States, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania have no categories of direct payments to assist with the education or accommodation of handicapped children. In Western Australia they are eligible for the Boarding Away from Home Allowance on the same conditions as other AIC beneficiaries.

7.19 Indirect benefits for accommodation are available through per-capita grants and grants-in-aid to organisations catering for handicapped children; but the conditions attached to those grants vary among the States. A handicapped children's benefit is payable through the Commonwealth Department of Social Security at the rate of $5 per child per day to eligible institutions providing approved residential accommodation. As at 30 June 1979, 106 organisations providing accommodation for 1151 children received this benefit.

Educational Problems of Handicapped Children

7.20 In some respects the problems for parents in placing their children in educational or training institutions are similar in rural and metropolitan areas. They are often characterised by a dearth of information, facilities and adequate services for diagnosis and remediation. For children in remote areas the problems may be particularly acute. It is the pattern that such children and their parents travel considerable distances to centres where diagnosis and treatment is available. Often it is at their own initiative. The following interview with a mother focussed on two of the major problems; the lack of appropriate facilities and services outside the major cities and the inadequacy of advice available to parents:

> "In my case nothing would have been done for my children if I had not made the first move and taken my children for numerous trips over thousands of miles between (a country town) and (the city) and I looked for help and worked on every clue which could have been of some help."

7.21 The problem of advising parents is not confined to those living in remote areas. The statement of the mother of a five-year old spastic boy living in metropolitan Sydney might have been made by many, irrespective of the geographic location of their homes:

> "At the time I didn't know who to contact and how to get help."

7.22 The consequences for those for whom intervention comes late were described quite simply by the father of a 16 year old boy with Cerebral Lepoidosis:

> "We were in (a country town) for about 8 years. The doctors in the city said, 'You might as well stay out in the bush'. We wanted to shift to the city to help him. They said, 'No, stay out in the bush' we can't do anything for him.' Then when we came up here (another country town) the teacher of the State School said, 'If you like to send him along one or two days a week to school, I'll try and help him.' From there, the Kindergarten said they'd take him a couple of days a week. The people there helped him along and he used to enjoy going to Kindergarten. And after that someone came out and said, 'Why isn't he at the opportunity school?' and we said, 'No one told us he could go.' We were told he'd never be able to go anywhere. When we were in the city the doctors said, 'You might as well keep him at home.'"

7.23 At the time of the interview the boy had attended the opportunity school in a distant town for three years. He had been enrolled at age 13 and can remain there until he is 18. He travelled home by bus one weekend each month. Previously he had remained at home.

7.24 Overriding the problems of handicapped children, however, is the lack of services outside the metropolitan areas of larger cities. In Queensland the Isolated Children's Special Education Unit assists isolated children with learning difficulties. Those served are beyond the reach of the Special Education Division and are enrolled with the Primary Correspondence School or remote primary schools. Different categories of intervention are provided according to the needs of the child and the availability of other assistance : general educational advice; referral to a more appropriate agency; alternative curricula and learning materials; programs individually designed for particular children; or the unit will take over the main teaching role in one or more curriculum areas for a limited time.

7.25 In Western Australia there are two services available: an itinerant remedial teacher for children in isolated areas, and diagnostic and remedial teaching services at the Chidley Centre. The function of the latter is to remediate learning

difficulties of country children who would not otherwise have access to special educational facilities. Although children from anywhere outside the metropolitan area may be admitted, priority is given to the isolated child. These services are complemented by the itinerant remedial teacher. Essentially the function of that service is to extend and co-ordinate remedial and other specialised services to children in isolated areas. More specifically, the mobile educational resource service is directed toward diagnosing and identifying specific learning problems to supplement or modify instructional programs; providing follow-up support for children returning from the Chidley Educational Centre; ascertaining the specialist professional needs of children with physical or intellectual handicaps; and investigating the learning difficulties of children referred by School of the Air, Correspondence or itinerant teachers. Given the size of Western Australia, the pressures of demand upon one teacher in a single mobile educational resource vehicle are not difficult to imagine.

7.26 In both of the States under examination, the thrust of the specialist services is toward children with learning problems enrolled in correspondence schools and isolated rural schools. The problem of the handicapped child is still resolved by having him stay at home simply because there is no educational provision for him, or to have him stay at a hostel in a distant city so that he can have access to special education. The lack of facilities is compounded by the diverse physical, intellectual, psychological and behavioural problems which are grouped under the generic title 'special education'.

7.27 In the metropolitan areas where facilities are more generally available the problems of information and advice pertain, but for the purposes of the AIC Scheme the more pertinent problem is that of cost. Because financial assistance is derived from general sources, State and Commonwealth authorities and private agencies, the direct costs to the parents of many handicapped children living away from home in institutions are less than those for children living in boarding schools or at hostels. Three examples illustrate the point.

(a) In Western Australia hostel accommodation is provided by the Mental Health Services for children who are moderately or profoundly retarded. In 1981 16 children were accommodated at the Devonleigh Hostel: 5 attended the White Gum Valley special school, 2 the Rhoda Smith Activity School, and 9 were excluded from schooling. Parents of children resident at the hostel have no financial obligation. Accommodation is free, but parents may buy clothing or furniture and chattels to brighten the children's rooms. Those who attend the special schools are eligible for the full range of AIC allowances on the standard conditions.

(b) Hostels are maintained in Western Australia by the Slow Learning Children's Group; the Clem Booth Hostel, and Pelican. Those at the Clem Booth Hostel attend the White Gum Valley Special School and are eligible for AIC allowances. In 1980 the charge to parents was $58 per week. From this was deducted the handicapped children's benefit from the Department of Social Security ($5 per day or $35 per week) leaving a net cost to parents of $23 per week or $943 p.a. In 1980 the combined value of the Basic Boarding Allowance and the State Government's Boarding Away from Home Allowance was $750. In 1981 it is $1,080.

(c) In Sydney the Intellectually and Physically Handicapped Children's Association of New South Wales maintains the Whitehall Private Nursing Home for 47 children aged 6 to 16 years, and the Bambi Private Nursing Home for 66 children aged 2 to 5 years. Expenditure for the maintenance of these nursing homes for children with multiple handicaps and requiring extensive care is met from patient contributions at the rate of $1.50 per day, income from Third Party cases as fees, income from Hospital Benefit Funds, donations, and the Commonwealth Health Department under deficit financing arrangements. The patient contribution represents a basic annual cost to parents of $540. The other major cost met is for pharmaceuticals. Some children from these nursing homes attend the Hoxton Park Special School and are eligible for the full range of AIC allowances.

7.28 The purpose of these illustrations is in no way to denigrate the importance of the service provided nor to deny the entitlement of parents to financial assistance. They are intended only to show the differences in cost structures, indirect contributions from other public and private authorities, and the consequent differences in direct costs met by some parents of handicapped children as compared with those of children at boarding schools and other hostels.

7.29 The evidence of the needs of handicapped children examined in the review suggests that the continued inclusion of the handicapped children's provision in the AIC Scheme is anomalous and that the support requirements of such children ought to be dealt with as part of general policy for special education. There is duplication and division of responsibility and effort by public authorities at the two levels of government, Commonwealth and State. There is further responsibility assumed by private organisations, motivated in part by the inadequacy of public effort. The general result is an unevenness of provision. There is an extensive range of problems embraced under the collective title of 'special education'.

7.30 In particular, the difficulties faced by country parents of children with disabilities are acute. They derive from lack of resources, lack of direct assistance, and the lack of informed advice. For city dwellers similar problems are evident but not in such magnitude. However, the cost structures and the direct and indirect assistance provided by State and Commonwealth authorities and by private organisations indicates a need for rationalisation and co-ordination of policy. In the long term a separate scheme of assistance should be devised which takes into account all forms of assistance, the needs, and the priorities for the accommodation and education of children with disabilities. In the meantime, it is evident that many families with handicapped children remain heavily dependent upon the benefits provided by the AIC Scheme. The recommended revised scale of allowances, when combined with other forms of assistance available to such children, appears to be adequate to meet existing costs.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:

(i) the total provisions for children with disabilities should be re-examined with a view to co-ordinating and rationalising the various forms of assistance; this should take place across Commonwealth Departments and between Commonwealth and State Governments;

(ii) in the long term a separate scheme of assistance should be created, but in the interim, the existing categories of children with disabilities should be provided for in the AIC Scheme at the revised levels of benefits recommended for the geographically isolated.

CHAPTER 8 SUMMARY

THE BOARDING ALLOWANCE

EXISTING PROVISION	RECOMMENDATIONS	RATIONALE
Basic Boarding Allowance A Basic Boarding Allowance of $780, free of means test . it is intended as a contribution toward the cost incurred by parents in boarding their eligible children away from home to attend school; . it is not intended to cover costs which parents would normally be required to meet if the children were living at home during the school term; . a student is eligible if his home is at least 16km from the nearest appropriate government school and at least 4.5km from the nearest transport service to that school; or a student whose home is less than 4.5km from public transport providing access to an appropriate government school is eligible for assistance if his home is 56km from that school or transport to and from school takes at least 3 hours per day.	**Boarding Allowance** IT IS RECOMMENDED: 1. that the Boarding Allowance should continue to be free of means test; 2. that the allowances be reduced to two: a Boarding Allowance and an Additional Boarding Allowance; 3. that the application procedures be simplified by: (i) modifying the original application form by eliminating requests for irrelevant information; and (ii) reducing the information requested about children who qualify for second and subsequent years; 4. that the Boarding Allowance should be an amount equal to the difference between the estimated average of boarding fees charged by boarding schools and hostels and the estimated average cost of maintaining a child at home. (It is estimated that in March 1981 prices the amount of the allowance would be $1,130, an increase of $350 on the existing Basic Boarding Allowance);	1. All children are entitled to free access to government schools. There is no discrimination exercised on grounds of the private financial capacity of parents. Compensation for difficulties of access arising from isolation should not be conditional upon the financial capacity or willingness of parents. 2. The existing scheme provides for three categories of allowances. The Special Supplementary Allowance is not related to costs of board, but is more realistically seen as a welfare benefit for income supplementation. It is not appropriate for a student allowance to seek the special objective of redistributing incomes. The purpose of the scheme is to facilitate equality of educational opportunity, and boarding allowances should be related to costs of board. 3. The existing three categories of allowances make necessary a set of detailed regulations and administrative procedures for determining eligibility. The consequent information requested of applicants requires application forms which are so complex that they appear to deter from applying significant numbers of persons who might otherwise be eligible. This problem is compounded by inadequate information and advice available in local districts. 4. Given that the Boarding Allowance is intended to enable access to schools and that parents should contribute to the maintenance of their children, the original principle of the Basic Boarding Allowance that it should not cover which parents are normally required to meet is reaffirmed.

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EXISTING PROVISION	RECOMMENDATIONS	RATIONALE
Basic Boarding Allowance (Cont'd)		
	5. that the Boarding Allowance be indexed by cost movements for maintenance for children and boarding charges;	5. Since 1973 the allowances have not maintained parity with actual costs. They have been subject to irregular ad-hoc increases and the gap between private costs and public financial assistance has widened. So that parity can be maintained, an index of boarding school and hostel costs should be established and the allowances payable adjusted proportionately. The value of the allowances must be constant in relation to costs so that parents can plan confidently for their children's education.
ADDITIONAL BOARDING ALLOWANCES		
Additional Boarding Allowance	**Additional Boarding Allowance**	
Parents who have a child eligible for the Basic Boarding Allowance may apply for an Additional Boarding Allowance for that child. The maximum payable is $600. Some allowance is payable if:	IT IS RECOMMENDED:	
(a) the Adjusted Family Income is between $10,312 (AFI on which the maximum allowance is payable) and $13,241 (AFI on which the minimum allowance is payable), and	6. that an Additional Boarding Allowance be available for those who can demonstrate that costs of boarding impose special financial hardship. In calculating need for such assistance private family income should be considered;	6. The central purpose of the scheme is to enable isolated children to have access to schools. There is strong evidence that for those on low incomes the costs of sending children away to school can be prohibitive. Where a child's educational opportunities might be restricted, additional Commonwealth support to meet the costs of board is justified.
(b) the 'net' boarding costs for the relevant year are greater than $515.	7. that the level of allowance should be sufficient, in cases of maximum need, to meet the full normal costs of children living away from home;	7. The actual costs are not restricted to fees charged for board, but include incidental and unavoidable costs for items such as books, clothing, linen and extra-curricula activities of the hostel or boarding school. Since these are part of the actual costs of board, they should be accounted for in calculating the value of allowances. Some families have minimal incomes. For the very poor, the additional allowance should be sufficient to cover all major cash outlays required to board children away from home.
SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTARY ALLOWANCE		
The Special Supplementary Allowance is available to parents who have children eligible for the Basic Boarding Allowance and who can demonstrate a particular financial hardship.	8. that the allowance should make adequate provision for families with more than one child at school away from home. To this end, the sibling concessional abatement rate in the existing Special Supplementary Allowance should be applied to the recommended Additional Boarding Allowance;	8. The costs to a family increase directly as the number of children at school away from home increases. Therefore, there is strong justification for retaining the sibling concessional abatement rate so that outlay for education does not impose an unreasonable burden of outlay from disposable family income.

EXISTING PROVISION	RECOMMENDATIONS	RATIONALE
Special Supplementary Allowance (Cont'd) The maximum Special Supplementary Allowance payable differs for primary and secondary students: Maximum for primary student $360 Maximum for junior secondary student $540 Maximum for senior secondary student $660 The allowance is subject to means test, but not to actual boarding costs. Thus a student may qualify for this allowance without qualifying for any Additional Boarding Allowance. A sibling concession allows for adjustment of the abatement rate of the allowance in proportion to the number of children in the family who qualify.	9. that the Marginal Adjusted Family Income for eligibility for the recommended Additional Allowance be set at the same level as THAT for 1982, i.e. $11,034;	9. The Additional Boarding Allowance is intended to assist those for whom the costs of sending their children away to school imposes severe financial hardship. Most families with income less than $11,034 could not meet the normal costs of board.
SECOND HOME ALLOWANCE A Second Home Allowance is payable to parents of an eligible student to assist with additional costs incurred by maintaining a second home for the purpose of providing the student with daily access to an appropriate school.	**NO CHANGE**	
The amount of the basic Second Home Allowance depends on the total number of children who: (a) live at the second home and attend an approved school daily, or (b) board away from the second home to attend an approved school. The amounts payable for 1981 are as follows: one child $ 780 two children $1,440 three children $1,990	**IT IS RECOMMENDED:** 10. that the amount of the Second Home Allowance should take account of the total number of children who: (a) live at the second home and attend an approved school, or (b) board away from the second home to attend approved school; that the amounts payable be: one child $1,130 two children $2,090 three children $2,640	10.1 There are circumstances in which the alternatives of correspondence tuition or sending the child away from home are not possible. These might include such things as: . the mother is unable to cope with correspondence, but the costs of private board are prohibitive, or the parents would prefer to keep the child at home with the mother; . the child suffers a medical condition which requires home care which is not possible in the institutional setting; . the child is attending remedial or special education classes and requires the type of care possible only in the home. Because the particular circumstances of any family might make necessary the maintaining of a second home for the primary purpose of enabling access to an appropriate school, then the family should be entitled to the same assistance as that provided for other children living away from home.

EXISTING PROVISION	RECOMMENDATIONS	RATIONALE
Second Home Allowance (Cont'd)		
Where it can be shown that the actual costs incurred exceed the amount of basic assistance, an Additional Second Home Allowance may be granted. A family's entitlement is calculated as a Boarding Allowance Equivalent, that is, the Basic Boarding Allowance for each child plus Additional Boarding Allowance and Special Supplementary Allowance entitlements. The family's 'second home costs' are the actual costs for approved items of expenditure.	NO CHANGE	10.2 It has been demonstrated that the costs of maintaining children at home diminish as a per capita amount in relation to the number of children in the household. Some of the initial general household expenditure is absorbed and per-capita costs diminish proportionately as the number of units in the household increases. Therefore, where more than one child is maintained in the second home the amount per child should be reduced proportionately. The existing rates (100 per cent of the Basic Boarding Allowance for the first child, 85 per cent for the second child, and 70 per cent for the third and more children) are compatible with the evidence of the household expenditure surveys and have been used to calculate the recommended allowances.
SHORT-TERM BOARDING ALLOWANCE		
To be eligible for Short-Term Boarding Allowance, a student must, for a period of no less than one school week and no more than one school term: (a) live away to attend a special school or institution controlled by a State Education Department or similar authority and receive diagnostic testing and/or remedial tuition; or (b) live away to undertake a course at a non-residential special school which caters for children with physical or intellectual handicaps or psychological, emotional or behavioural problems; or (c) live away from home to undertake short-term remedial instruction at the Chidley Educational Centre, Perth, or the Duffy Remedial Reading Centre, Sydney, or three-month on-the-job training conducted by the National Association for Training the Disabled in Office Work (NADOW, NSW) The allowance is payable at the rate of $20 per week.	IT IS RECOMMENDED: 11. that to be eligible for Short-Term Boarding Allowance, a student must, for a period of no less than one school week and no more than one school term live away to attend an approved institution while undergoing diagnostic or remedial instruction or treatment of physical, psychological, emotional or behavioural problems which have been shown to inhibit school learning. For 1981 the allowance payable should be at the rate of $52.50 per week. Consideration should be given by State authorities to the payment of a Travelling Allowance for transport between the child's home and the institution attended.	11.1 Those children who have special handicaps and needs should have access to additional resources to equalise their educational opportunities. Country children whose school learning is impeded by inappropriate cognitive skills which can be remediated or who are otherwise inhibited in school learning by intellectual or physical disability, by medical conditions, or by psychical, psychological, emotional or behavioural problems are handicapped by their isolation from special education facilities or resources for the diagnosis, remediation and treatment of their problems. Where a short-term stay can alleviate educational problems associated with such problems, students affected should be assisted in the same manner as other children who must live away from home to have access to appropriate schools. The sum recommended for short-term board is the weekly equivalent of average boarding costs (i.e. $2,100 divided by 40 weeks of the school year). The incidental costs associated with full-time living away from home should not be considered in these cases.

EXISTING PROVISION	RECOMMENDATIONS	RATIONALE
Short-Term Boarding Allowance (Cont'd)		11.2 Where appropriate non-government schools or institutions provide services which might meet the needs of such students, and which are approved for special purposes, then the allowances otherwise payable for attendance at government institutions should be available.
STUDENTS UNDERTAKING SPECIAL COURSES		
A student who lives away from home to undertake a special course: (i) leading to a specific qualification; (ii) which is a necessary pre-requisite to post-secondary studies; (iii) a course in drama, music, art or ballet may qualify for assistance, provided: (a) his home satisfies the scheme's distance criteria in relation to the school offering the special course; (b) there is no other school within the prescribed distance limits of his home which offers such a course and which he could attend daily.	12. NO CHANGE	12. Although there is a case for making AIC benefits available to children with other talents than those currently prescribed, it remains important to try to ensure that a balance is retained between providing this element of choice and ensuring the continuing viability of government secondary schools in small and remote country areas.
TRAVELLING ALLOWANCES	IT IS RECOMMENDED:	
No special provision is included in the Commonwealth's AIC Scheme for assisting with the costs of travel between home and place of board. This has been regarded as a State responsibility since the matter was considered by the Australian Education Council in 1972. The various provisions within the States are based upon differing conditions of eligibility, types of service and amounts payable. There is not a uniform rationale governing assistance for the transportation of students.	13. that urgent action be taken by State Governments to resolve problems of transportation of isolated students to their places of board. Two directions for such action have urgent priority: (a) the provision of either financial assistance or free return passage on appropriate forms of transport (bus, train or aeroplane) between the student's home and his or her place of board at least three times a year; (b) strategies to alleviate transport problems in regions affected by climatic conditions, or where transport is difficult because of rough terrain, impassable roads, or lack of regular public transport services. The most obvious measure in this regard is light aircraft.	13. The problem of cost burdens associated with transporting isolated students between home and schools has long been regarded as a serious one requiring urgent attention from State Governments. The present arrangements are uneven, meagre and often unsuited to the particular transport needs of students. The transportation of students should remain a State responsibility, because: (i) it is integrally involved with State Government policies for providing transport services; (ii) it is closely related to State Education Department policies for transporting the general student body to schools;

EXISTING PROVISION	RECOMMENDATIONS	RATIONALE
Travelling Allowances (Cont'd)		(iii) geographic differences between the States and between regions within States necessitate particular action to resolve regional problems. Such action should be planned and executed by the States. It is suggested that, if the level of financial assistance available through the AIC Scheme is adequate to give all students access to appropriate schools, the States might direct funds now allocated to boarding away from home allowances to assistance with costs of travel. That is, the States might provide Transportation Allowances instead of present levels of living away from home allowances.
THE CORRESPONDENCE ALLOWANCE	HOME SUPERVISION ALLOWANCE	
To be eligible for the Correspondence Allowance the student must be living at the parental home or the home of some other person that satisfies the distance conditions of the scheme, and be enrolled with the Correspondence School or other appropriate section of the State Education Department, normally for a full course of correspondence studies. An allowance of $500 per annum is payable for each eligible primary or secondary correspondence student. This allowance is intended to assist parents with the various costs associated with correspondence studies. This allowance is not subject to means test and is not accountable. To receive full correspondence benefits, the student must return lessons regularly in accordance with the requirements of the Correspondence School in which he is enrolled.	IT IS RECOMMENDED:	
	14. that the concept of a Correspondence Allowance be replaced by a Home Supervision Allowance paid for all children enrolled full-time at a Correspondence School. The allowance should be available for pre-school, primary and secondary correspondence education, but the amount payable should be calculated at a pro-rata rate in proportion to the portion of the school day expected to be devoted to lessons;	14. The lack of a classroom teacher for the isolated child is most effectively compensated for by dedicated and capable home supervision. The role of the home supervisor is of primary importance. It is the essential component provided within the home for effective correspondence education.
	15. that, in the first instance, subject to determination of alternative bases for calculating such an allowance, the Home Supervision Allowance should remain at the present level of $500 per pupil, but be subject to annual adjustments consistent with movements in costs;	15. The existing amount of the Correspondence Allowance is more than adequate for the purchase of learning aids and other expenditure items directly associated with correspondence schooling. It is inadequate to meet the cost of employing a home supervisor. To raise it to that level would be prohibitively costly, and would not help those families who for various reasons cannot employ a home supervisor.
	16. that recognition be given to the priority need for expansion of programs of itinerant teachers, in-service training of parents and home supervisors, and for specialist services for diagnosing and remediating the learning problems of children studying by correspondence;	16. There is a need for additional personnel to be provided to assist and advise home supervisors in their tasks. The majority of them are not professionally trained. To ensure maximum quality of instruction there is need for support services. The problems encountered where correspondence school learning is conducted at home cannot be compensated by the payment of financial assistance, but require the direct intervention of professionally trained personnel.

EXISTING PROVISION	RECOMMENDATIONS	RATIONALE
The Correspondence Allowance Home Supervision Allowance (Cont'd)		The provision of Correspondence Schools and affiliated services are the direct responsibilities of the State Governments, although the Commonwealth, through its Country Areas Program, could emphasise that priority should be given to meeting these home supervision needs.
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES		
'Disability' is defined as:	IT IS RECOMMENDED:	
(a) a physical or intellectual handicap (b) a physical, psychological, emotional or behavioural problem, or (c) a medical condition.	17. the total provisions should be re-examined with a view to co-ordinating the various forms of assistance;	17. There is duplication and division of responsibility and effort by public authorities at Commonwealth and State levels. Further responsibility has been assumed by private organisations. The general result appears to be unawareness of provision and confusion on the part of those who provide services and those who seek them. The difficulties faced by country parents of children with disabilities are acute. They include lack of resources, a lack of direct assistance, and a lack of informed advice.
A child with a disability may qualify for benefits if: . he boards at a special institution which caters for his disability; . he boards or lives at a second home in order to have access to a special school or to other special facilities; . he lives away from home to avoid the effects of lengthy daily travel; . he lives at home and undertakes approved correspondence studies; . he lives away from home or at a second family home in order to receive frequent, extensive and essential medical treatment; . he lives at a second home to avoid climatic conditions or similar circumstances which adversely affect his health (e.g. local pollens aggravating asthma).	18. that in the long term a separate scheme of assistance be created, but in the interim, the existing categories of children with disabilities should be provided for in the AIC Scheme at the levels suggested for geographically isolated normal children.	18. The cost structures and direct and indirect assistance provided by State and Commonwealth authorities and by private organisations indicate a need for rationalisation and co-ordination of policy. Conceptually handicapped children fall outside the basic rationale of the AIC Scheme. A separate scheme of assistance should be devised which takes into account services available, the special needs of particular forms of handicap, and the priorities for the accommodation and education of children with disabilities. Such a rationalisation of the provision of financial assistance to handicapped children should involve all Commonwealth and State departments and authorities currently involved in this area, and should be the subject of a separate inquiry.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

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COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN

PARENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE

(FORM A : WESTERN AUSTRALIA)

PLEASE *DO NOT* WRITE YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM

On what grounds did your child or children qualify for assistance under the Isolated Children's Scheme?

- Please tick (✓) the appropriate box.
- If you have children who qualified on different grounds (e.g. one a handicapped primary school child and another a secondary school child who lives away from home to attend a senior high school) you should tick more than one box.

A. The family home is more than 4.5 km from the nearest transport service, and more than 16 km from the nearest appropriate government school. ☐

B. The family is within 4.5 km of the nearest transport service, but more than 56 km from the nearest appropriate government school. ☐

C. Travel to and from school by available transport would take at least three hours each day. ☐

D. The family home is frequently isolated during bad weather by impassable roads. ☐

E. The child is handicapped and must live away from home to attend a special institution. ☐

F. The child is handicapped and studies at home by correspondence. ☐

G. The child is undertaking a course of studies not available at the local school. ☐

H. The family moves frequently for employment purposes to widely scattered locations. ☐

I. The family moved to a new home during the school year and the child lived away from home to continue at the same school. ☐

J. Other (please specify _____ ☐

_____

_____

SECTION A : THE FAMILY AND THE HOME

1. Present family situation

   (Tick (✓) the appropriate box)

   two parent family ☐

   one parent family : father only ☐

   mother only ☐

   other (e.g. guardian, relative) ☐

   (specify _____)

2. Please write down in the spaces below the age and sex of all the children in your family (including those not attending school).

   If you have more than six children please provide the information on a separate sheet of paper.

	ELDEST CHILD	2nd CHILD	3rd CHILD	4th CHILD	5th CHILD	6th CHILD
AGE (YEARS)						
SEX (M or F)						

3. How would you describe your family home?

   (Tick (✓) the appropriate box)

   house/flat ☐

   hotel/motel ☐

   workers' quarters ☐

   caravan/tent ☐

   other (specify _____) ☐

4. How long has your family lived at its present address?

   NOTE: If less than one year, please tick (✓) the second box.

   Years ☐

   Less than one year ☐

5. How frequently is the mail delivered to your home (or postal address)?

(Tick (✓) the appropriate box)

every week day	☐
two or three times a week	☐
once a week	☐
once a fortnight	☐
once a month	☐
less than once a month	☐
no regular mail service	☐

6. How frequently do your children have an opportunity to play with others outside the family and of their own age (other than at school)?

(Tick (✓) the appropriate box)

	eldest child	2nd child	3rd child	4th child	5th child	6th child
every day	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
two or three times a week	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
once a week	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
once a fortnight	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
once a month	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
less than once a month	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
no regular opportunity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. Please indicate how far your home is from each of the following by placing a tick (✓) in the appropriate boxes.

NOTE: 1 mile = 1.6 kilometres.

	LESS THAN 5 km	5-16 km	17-25 km	26-50 km	51-100 km	MORE THAN 100 km
7.1 the town you visit most frequently	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7.2 the nearest scheduled passenger service connecting to a major town or city (bus, train, or plane)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. continued ... how far from each of the following ...

	LESS THAN 5 km	5-16 km	17-25 km	26-50 km	51-100 km	MORE THAN 100 km
7.3 the nearest						
Government Primary School	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Non-Government Primary School	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Government District High School	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Government Senior High School	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Non-Government High School	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION B : DETAILS OF PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS AND INCOMES

NOTE: . Please provide information for BOTH PARENTS.

. Where applicable, assume that "FATHER" includes the male guardian and "MOTHER" includes the female guardian.

8. Trade, profession, or occupation (please write the answer e.g. labourer, farmer, pastoralist, fisherman, doctor, miner, policeman, teacher, postman, home duties, etc).

FATHER/ MALE GUARDIAN	MOTHER/ FEMALE GUARDIAN

9. Category of employment

	FATHER/ MALE GUARDIAN	MOTHER/ FEMALE GUARDIAN
A. wage or salary earner	☐	☐
B. self employed	☐	☐
C. pensioner	☐	☐
D. currently unemployed	☐	☐
E. other (specify _____)	☐	☐

10. Type of industry in which parent is usually employed

		FATHER/ MALE GUARDIAN	MOTHER/ FEMALE GUARDIAN
A.	agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting	☐	☐
B.	mining	☐	☐
C.	manufacturing	☐	☐
D.	electricity, gas, water	☐	☐
E.	construction	☐	☐
F.	wholesale and retail trade	☐	☐
G.	transport and storage	☐	☐
H.	communication	☐	☐
I.	finance, insurance, real estate, business services	☐	☐
J.	public administration and defence	☐	☐
K.	community services (including education)	☐	☐
L.	entertainment, recreation, restaurants, hotels and personal services	☐	☐
M.	other not elsewhere stated (specify _____)	☐	☐

11. What was your TAXABLE income for the financial year 1976-77, 1977-78 and 1978-79?

NOTE: . this information will be treated as confidential.

. TAXABLE INCOME is total assessable income from all sources less deductions for expenses incurred in gaining assessable income, investment allowances, and other deductions approved by the Commissioner of Taxation. The income upon which tax was payable.

. tick (✓) the appropriate box.

	FATHER/MALE GUARDIAN			MOTHER/FEMALE GUARDIAN		
	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79
no taxable income	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
$ 1 to $ 2,999	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
$ 3,000 to $ 4,999	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
$ 5,000 to $ 7,499	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
$ 7,500 to $ 9,999	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
$10,000 to $12,499	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
$12,500 to $14,999	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
$15,000 to $17,499	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
$17,500 to $19,999	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
$20,000 and over	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION C : DETAILS OF CHILDREN'S PRESENT EDUCATION

NOTE: . please provide information for 1980 for each child attending primary or secondary school.

. to answer question 12, write the present year-level of schooling for each child (that is, the grade level - Year 1 = Grade I and so on).

. to answer questions 13 to 15 work down each column for each child, placing a tick (✓) in the appropriate box.

12. Present year-level of schooling (Years 1 - 12)

NOTE: . if the child is enrolled in an ungraded class, please indicate with a tick (✓) in the box for that child.

Eldest Child	2nd Child	3rd Child	4th Child	5th Child	6th Child
Year ☐	Year ☐	Year ☐	Year ☐	Year ☐	Year ☐

13. Type of school

	Eldest Child	2nd Child	3rd Child	4th Child	5th Child	6th Child
Government	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Catholic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other Non-Government	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. Type of enrolment

	Eldest Child	2nd Child	3rd Child	4th Child	5th Child	6th Child
day student	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
boarding school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
correspondence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
school of air	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. Type of accommodation during school year

	Eldest Child	2nd Child	3rd Child	4th Child	5th Child	6th Child
lives at home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
board with a relative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
other private board	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
hostel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
boarding school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
second home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
special institution (e.g. for the handicapped)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. If any of your children live away from home to attend school, how often do they return home? (Tick (✓) the appropriate box)

	Eldest Child	2nd Child	3rd Child	4th Child	5th Child	6th Child
weekly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
monthly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
once a term	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
once a year	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. What level of education do you expect each of your children will reach? (Tick (✓) the appropriate box)

	Eldest Child	2nd Child	3rd Child	4th Child	5th Child	6th Child
University or College of Advanced Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trade Training Courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other, e.g. Agricultural Training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Year 11-12	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Complete Year 10	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Less than Year 10	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. For those of your children who live away from home to attend school, are you satisfied with their accommodation?

(Tick (✓) the appropriate box)

	Eldest Child	2nd Child	3rd Child	4th Child	5th Child	6th Child
YES	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
NO	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18.1 If "no" to question 18 what is the reason?

(Tick (✓) the appropriate box, or more than one box if applicable)

the cost of accommodation ☐

the quality of care/supervision ☐

the standard of facilities ☐

other (specify _____) ☐

Please explain the reason for your dissatisfaction: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

18.2 If "no" to question 18 what alternative accommodation would you prefer for your children?

	Eldest Child	2nd Child	3rd Child	4th Child	5th Child	6th Child
private board	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
hostel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
boarding school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
second home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION D : THE COST OF EDUCATION

19. How much did you pay for the education of your children in the 1979 school year?

NOTE:
- Tuition fees are fees charged by the school for general instructional purposes.
- Boarding fees are payments made to a boarding school, hostel, or for private board.
- Travel costs are actual costs of travel between school and home.
- Correspondence costs are actual payments made for children educated at home by correspondence.
- If no costs were incurred write "NIL".

	Eldest Child $	2nd Child $	3rd Child $	4th Child $	5th Child $	6th Child $
tuition fees						
boarding fees						
travel to and from school						
correspondence						

20. If any of your children were on correspondence in 1979, what did you spend on each of the following items?

NOTE:
- Postage costs are actual costs for return of lessons, etc.
- Books include required recommended texts as well as additional books purchased such as encyclopaedias, etc.
- Teaching aids are materials such as maps, charts, project material, etc.
- Audio equipment includes radios and radio parts, tape recorders, etc.
- Governess or tutor: wages paid to person actually employed to teach your children.
- Accommodation costs: associated with attendance at a special educational activity for correspondence students.
- Domestic help: employment of domestic help specifically to free a parent for supervisory duties.

20. continued ... what did you spend on each of the following items?

	Eldest Child $	2nd Child $	3rd Child $	4th Child $	5th Child $	6th Child $
postage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
books	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
teaching aids	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
audio equipment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
governess or tutor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
accommodation costs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
domestic help	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

21. Are there any other significant direct or indirect costs you had to meet for the education of your children in 1979?

☐ YES ☐ NO

If "yes", please give details of the costs and the nature of the costs:

---

22. How much financial assistance for the education of your children did you receive from the State and Commonwealth Governments or from other sources in 1979?

	Eldest Child $	2nd Child $	3rd Child %	4th Child %	5th Child %	6th Child %
STATE						
Living away from home allowance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Remote Area Scholarship	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

22. continued ... how much financial assistance for the education of your children did you receive ...

COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN	Eldest Child $	2nd Child $	3rd Child $	4th Child $	5th Child $	6th Child $
basic boarding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
additional boarding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
special supplementary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
second home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
additional second home	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
correspondence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
correspondence reimbursement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
other financial assistance (please specify _____)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

23. To finance the education of your children have you had to do any of the following?

(Tick (✓) the appropriate boxes)

- borrow from a bank or other financial institution ☐
- defer home or property improvements ☐
- wife take a job ☐
- husband take a second job ☐
- mortgage family home ☐
- borrow against or surrender life assurance policies ☐
- other (specify _____) ☐

Please give details: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION E : PARENT COMMENTS ON THE COMMONWEALTH'S ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN (AIC) SCHEME

NOTE: . To answer the questions in this section you are asked to indicate your level of agreement with each statement.

. Tick (✓) the appropriate box.

The Administration of the Scheme

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Uncertain
24.	There is plenty of information available to parents about the AIC scheme.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25.	The application forms are easy to read and fill in.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26.	The payment of allowances is usally prompt and regular.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27.	The boarding allowances should be increased annually to allow for inflation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28.	The means test on additional allowances is fair.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29.	The cost of travel between home and school is a fair cost to be borne by parents.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30.	The distance from school to qualify for assistance is appropriate in the area where I live.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

31. Do you think that the allowances paid under the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme are adequate? (Please provide comments, suggestions, recommendations in the space provided below);

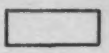
---

32. Are there any faults or anomalies within the Assistance for Isolated Children scheme not dealt with in previous questions? (Please provide comments, suggestions, recommendations in the space provided below):

Interview Schedule for Parents of Isolated Children

Section 1 (Introduction)

1. How many children do you have receiving assistance from the Isolated Children's Scheme?



2. What schools do your children attend?

3. What levels are they in at school?

4. Are they at the right level for their age?

5. Do you receive both State and Commonwealth allowances?

State	Commonwealth	Both
☐	☐	☐

6. How long have you been receiving Commonwealth Assistance?

7. How did you find out about them?

8. Are the application forms straightforward, i.e. easy to complete?

Yes	No
☐	☐

If No, Why?

Section 2 (Correspondence)

If you have child/children doing correspondence studies,

9. Why did you choose to educate your child/children by correspondence rather than sending them away from home to a boarding school or hostel?

10. Do you think that it is reasonable to expect parents to play such a large part in educating their child/children?

Yes	No
☐	☐

11. If no, have you had any difficulties in teaching your child/children? What were these?

12. Has any sort of help (apart from direct financial assistance) been available to you to meet these difficulties? (for e.g. the Schools Commission Scheme for PCAP and DCAP - explain).

13. Do you think more help should be provided?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If Yes, what form should this take?

14. Do you think correspondence lessons have affected your child's/ children's progress at school?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If Yes, in what ways?

15. With respect to the allowances you receive under the Isolated Children's Scheme, do you qualify for the basic correspondence allowance only or do you also receive an additional allowance?

Basic ☐ Additional ☐ Both ☐

16. On what sort of things do you find that this money is mainly spent? (On parents? On children?)

Section 3 (Boarding)

If you have child/children living away from home,

17. Why did you choose to send your children away from home rather than educating them by correspondence?

18. Did you choose a boarding school/hostel/private home?

19. If hostel/private home, why?

20. If boarding school, what are the advantages of this arrangement which make you willing to pay the additional costs?

e.g. supervision/pastoral care
facilities
extra-curricular activities?

21. Do you think in view of what you've just said, that boarding fees are too high?

YES ☐ NO ☐

22. As a parent what problems (other than financial) have you encountered in sending your children away from home?

23. Do you think that living away from home has affected your child's progress at school?

YES ☐ NO ☐

24. With respect to the allowances you receive under the Isolated Children's Scheme, do you qualify for the basic boarding allowance only or do you also receive an additional allowance?

Basic ☐ Additional ☐ Both ☐

25. On what sort of things do you find this money is mainly spent?

Section 4 (Financial hardship with respect to boarding)

26. Do you have any trouble in meeting the difference between your actual boarding costs and the allowances you receive?

YES ☐ NO ☐

27. Have any of your children been withdrawn from a boarding school or hostel because of financial hardship?

YES ☐ NO ☐

When?
Which child?
Boarding school or hostel?
Did the child return?

28. Have any of your children been forced to finish their secondary schooling earlier than you had planned because of financial hardship?

YES ☐ NO ☐

When?
Which child?
Which level?
Level planned?

29. Has your application for assistance under the Isolated Children's Scheme ever been rejected?

YES ☐ NO ☐

When?
What type of allowance?
Why?
Did it effect choice of school?
Did it effect choice of accommodation?

30. Do you have children who are not enrolled this year in a boarding school or hostel because of financial hardship?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Which children?
Boarding school of hostel?
Will they be enrolled in 1981?

31. If you did not receive allowances under the Isolated Children's Scheme would your children have

(i) attended the same school? ☐
(ii) had the same board? ☐

If not, what alternative would you have chosen?

Correspondence? ☐
Private board? ☐
A non-government school you could afford? ☐
Hostel? ☐
Other? ☐

32. Do you think that the allowances received under the Isolated Children's Scheme have been adequately increased over the years?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Section 5 (General views)

33. If children have received allowances under this scheme for some time, have you noticed any changes, for better or worse, in the provision of educational services to your children since the introduction of the scheme?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If Yes, what sort of changes?

34. Do you think that the means test on additional allowances discriminates against you in any way?

YES ☐ NO ☐

35. Does the assitance you receive under the Isolated Children's Scheme enable you to provide an adequate education for your child?

YES ☐ NO ☐

36. Do you think that it is reasonable to expect the parents of isolated children to make some contribution towards the costs of educating their children?

YES ☐ NO ☐

37. Do you think there should be any changes to the scheme that would make you feel happier about your child's/children's education opportunities?

(Probe) _____ YES ☐ NO ☐

If Yes, _____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

ISOLATED CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

Some Additional Tables

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1. Some characteristics of rural AIC families and their children

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2. Attitudes towards the AIC Scheme, with special reference to accommodation and costs

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The purpose of this Appendix is to present some further tables which have particular relevance to Chapters Four and Five. The omission of these tables from the text has been necessitated by the quantity of statistical data generated by this study. It was considered appropriate that these additional tables, many of which have been referred to in the Report, be combined in this Appendix, together with some explanatory notes.

The material to be presented will be categorised under one of two headings, namely:

(i) Some characteristics of rural AIC families and their children, and

(2) attitudes towards the AIC Scheme, with special reference to accommodation and costs.

Each table presented makes reference to both Western Australian and Queensland respondents.

1. Some characteristics of rural AIC families and their children

TABLE 1

GROUNDS FOR ASSISTANCE - DISTRIBUTION OF MULTIPLE RESPONSES

Number of grounds for assistance	Western Australia	Queensland
	% age	% age
1	67.9	58.6
2	19.1	21.4
3 or more	11.6	19.3
No response	1.4	0.7
Total	100.0	100.0

Comments

1. Nearly 31 per cent of children in Western Australia and 41 per cent in Queensland qualify for AIC on two or more grounds.

2. Harsher weather conditions and the problem of impassable roads may be a factor in determining the higher percentage of multiple responses in Queensland.

TABLE 2

FAMILY STRUCTURE

Family Structure	Western Australia		Queensland	
	Nos.	% age	Nos.	% age
Two parent	804	93.3	1149	93.4
One parent (father)	15	1.7	25	2.0
One parent (mother)	33	3.8	48	3.9
Other	3	0.4	4	0.3
No response	7	0.8	5	0.4
Total	862	100.0	1231	100.0

Comments

1. The percentage of two-parent family units in the sample is slightly higher than is that for the respective State populations (as measured in 1975).[1]

2. There is less evidence of the single-parent family unit in the sample, however, where it does exist, it is more likely to be headed by a male than is such a unit in the general population.

1. See *General Social Survey of Australian Families* - 1975, ABS Catalogue No. 4107, page 15.

TABLE 3

TYPE OF FAMILY HOME

Family Home	Western Australia		Queensland	
	Nos.	% age	Nos.	% age
House/flat	803	93.2	1120	91.0
Hotel/motel	4	0.5	7	0.6
Workers' quarters	27	3.1	51	4.1
Caravan/tent	9	1.0	24	2.0
Other	12	1.4	25	2.0
No response	7	0.8	4	0.3
Total	862	100.0	1231	100.0

Comments

Although the most common form of accommodation was described as a house or flat, interviews revealed considerable variation within this category. On numerous occasions, conditions were far from ideal, especially with regard to the provision of correspondence lessons.

TABLE 4

LENGTH OF RESIDENCE BY TYPE OF INDUSTRY (FATHER)

Length of Residence	TYPE OF INDUSTRY												
	Agric	Mining	Manuf	Elect	Constr	W/R Trade	Transp	Comm	Finance	P. Admin	C. Serv	Ent	Other
Queensland													
Less than 1 year	148	9	1	1	8	3	2	0	4	1	5	0	0
1-5 years	195	11	3	0	9	6	10	4	2	6	14	4	8
6-10 years	189	10	1	1	3	1	8	3	0	4	6	2	5
More than 10 years	403	9	1	4	6	6	11	3	0	1	8	3	8
Total	935	39	6	6	26	16	31	10	6	12	33	9	21

N = 1150

Western Australia													
Less than 1 year	34	3	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	4	2	3
1-5 years	88	22	0	5	12	9	5	3	3	5	6	4	6
6-10 years	80	16	1	3	3	3	4	2	1	1	3	1	4
More than 10 years	412	13	2	4	5	12	8	2	1	1	3	2	10
Total	614	54	3	13	20	25	18	7	5	7	16	9	23

N = 814

Comments

1. Those in the sample who were employed in 'agriculture, forestry, fishing or hunting' appear to be a relative stable occupational group. This pattern is more marked in Western Australia than Queensland.
2. Any comments about the residential mobility of respondents in other occupational categories should be made with caution, in view of the low numbers of those so employed.

TABLE 5

APPROXIMATE FAMILY INCOMES (TAXABLE)[1] FOR THE FINANCIAL YEARS 1976-1978 INCLUSIVE

Approx. family incomes (taxable)	Queensland Financial Years			Western Australia Financial Years		
	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79	1976-77	1977-78	1978-79
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Under $5,000[2]	36.9	31.1	18.9	25.1	30.7	24.2
$5,000 to $9,999	25.0	23.7	17.1	15.9	17.1	14.1
$10,000 to $14,999	15.2	20.1	17.9	14.8	16.5	15.8
$15,000 to $19,999	11.7	11.7	16.5	15.0	12.0	17.0
Over $20,000	11.2	13.4	29.6	29.2	23.7	28.9

1 Taxable income was defined as 'total assessable income from all sources, less deductions for expenses incurred in gaining assessable income, investment allowances, and other deductions approved by the Commissioner of Taxation. The income upon which tax was payable.'

2 Includes those with no taxable income.

Comments

1. Even when calculated on a family basis, taxable incomes for rural AIC recipients remain low.

2. As the majority of recipients are property or business owners, many have benefited from deductions to their total income not available to wage and salary earners. Any comparisons made between these figures and those formulated on a State or national basis should, therefore, be made with considerable caution. (See Lenahan, Todhunter and Burke 1980:38).

TABLE 6

CATEGORY OF SCHOOL ATTENDED[1]

Type of School	Queensland		Western Australia	
	Nos.	% age	Nos.	% age
Government	1550	60	1217	69
Catholic	457	17	242	13
Other Non-Government	590	23	315	18
Total	2597	100	1774	100

1 Note: this information refers to 1980 enrolments and includes all children in a family, not only those in receipt of AIC.

Comments

1. Between 31 and 40 per cent of all school-aged children in the families surveyed attended non-government schools. While high in comparison with State figures, this finding clearly reflects the large number of children who are required to live away from home, and who board at non-government schools.

2. The higher proportion of children attending non-government schools in Queensland reflects the shortage of hostel facilities in that State.

TABLE 7

CATEGORY OF ENROLMENT[1]

Category of enrolment	Queensland Nos	Queensland % age	Western Australia Nos.	Western Australia % age
Day student	1065	40	939	52
Boarding School	1039	39	726	41
Correspondence	413	15	57	3
School of the Air	167	6	66	4
Total	2684	100	1788	100

1 Note: See Note to Table 6.

Comments

1. There are proportionally many more children in Queensland enrolled in correspondence or school of the air than in Western Australia.

2. The well established system of District High Schools in Western Australia may, in part, account for the high proportion of children in that State being enrolled as 'day students'. A second factor which may have influenced response is the significant proportion of students in that State who boarded at hostels and attended Government Senior High Schools.

TABLE 8

FREQUENCY OF HOME VISITS

Frequency	Queensland		Western Australia	
	Nos.	% age	Nos,	% age
Weekly	283	22	100	10
Monthly	379	29	373	36
Once a term	637	48	548	53
Once a year	11	1	11	1
Total	1310	100	1032	100

Comments

1. Approximately half of those students living away to attend school returned home once a term. The other 50 per cent made more frequent visits home, be they monthly or weekly.

2. Proportionally, about twice as many Queensland students made weekly visits home in comparison to their Western Australian counterparts.

TABLE 9

TYPE OF INSTITUTION ATTENDED BY TERTIARY STUDENTS OF RURAL QUEENSLAND AIC FAMILIES [1]

Type of Institution	Nos.	% age
University	38	24
CAE	52	32
Technical/Agricultural College etc.	72	44

1 This question was asked only of Queensland families. It was included following numerous comments in interviews which made reference to the additional burden of tertiary education. The Western Australian questionnaire had been despatched earlier.

Comments

1. Just over half of the students enrolled at tertiary institutions attended Universities or CAE's.

2. There is little doubt that for families with children living away from home to attend both secondary and tertiary institutions, the financial burden would be considerable.

2. Attitudes towards the AIC Scheme with special reference to accommodation and costs.

TABLE 10

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH LIVING AWAY FROM HOME ARRANGEMENTS

Satisfied with existing arrangements	Queensland		Western Australia	
	Nos.	% age	Nos.	% age
Yes	1157	88	947	89
No	161	12	121	11
Total	1318	100	1068	100

Comments

1. A high level of satisfaction with living away from home arrangements was expressed by parents in both States.

2. It was evidenced in Chapter Five, Table 5.2B that where dissatisfaction was expressed, it was more likely to be directed towards hostels than boarding schools.

TABLE 11

ACCOMMODATION PREFERENCES OF THOSE PARENTS DISSATISFIED WITH EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS

Accommodation preference	Queensland		Western Australia	
	Nos.	% age	Nos.	% age
Private Board	25	18	17	15
Hostel	13	9	22	19
Boarding School	71	50	41	36
Second Home	33	23	35	30
Total	142	100	115	100

Comments

1. Boarding school accommodation is the main preference for parents in both States who are dissatisfied with existing arrangements. Following this, is preference for the second home situation.

2. Very few Queensland parents consider hostels as a satisfactory accommodation alternative.

TABLE 12A

AREAS OF DISSATISFACTION WITH EXISTING LIVING AWAY FROM HOME ARRANGEMENTS - QUEENSLAND[1]

Areas of Dissatisfaction	Nos.
High costs	41
Loss of control over child's development; don't see child often enough; don't like splitting up the family	15
Unsatisfactory supervision/supervisors; lack of family atmosphere	8
Poor standard of buildings and facilities	8
Accommodation too far away, has led to very high travelling costs	7
Poor diet	7
Not enough organised sport and activities	4
Inability of child to adjust to communal living away from home	3
More country hostels needed	2
Lack of communication between staff and parents	2
Boarders are mainly aboriginals	2
Accommodation overcrowded	2
	101

Isolated Comments

- not enough boarding facilities for younger children
- too little discipline
- difficult maintaining a second home for 10 years

1 Re: Tables 12A, B, 14A, B to 17A, B, The sample size for Queensland and Western Australia was 1231 and 862 respectively. It should be stressed, however, that many respondents raised more than one of the issues

TABLE 12B

AREAS OF DISSATISFACTION WITH EXISTING LIVING AWAY FROM HOME ARRANGEMENTS - WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Areas of Dissatisfaction	Nos.
Cost of hostels/boarding schools are high, also if more than one child attends, it can be a problem	32
Unhappy about care and supervision, not enough staff, lack of guidance, wardens unsuitable - lack of study supervision and organised activities (N.B. these responses generally related to hostels)	27
Accommodation is basic, no floor coverings, iron beds, cockroaches, poor dining and laundry facilities, over-crowding. (N.B. these responses related in the main to hostels)	18
Food and standard of nutrition is poor	11
Colleges are expensive; more staff needed	4
Don't like sending children away	4
Hostels should have more financial assistance from the government	3
	99

Isolated comments

- more boarding facilities needed for primary school children
- institutions are too far away
- handicapped child's living away from home costs are high
- boarding with relatives can be a problem

Comments

1. Criticism of physical living conditions in the main were directed towards hostels (especially in Western Australia).

2. The cost of accommodation was a major concern in both States, whether a hostel or boarding situation.

TABLE 13A

VIEWS ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE AIC SCHEME - QUEENSLAND

Item	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Uncertain	No Response	Total[1]
	%	%	%	%	%
26. There is plenty of information available to parents about the AIC Scheme	64	22	8	6	100
27. The application forms are easy to read and fill in	72	20	3	5	100
28. The payment of allowances is usually prompt and regular	88	6	2	4	100
29. The boarding allowances should be increased annually to allow for inflation	87	1	4	8	100
30. The means test on additional allowances is fair	45	34	12	9	100
31. The cost of travel between home and school is a fair cost to be borne by parents	29	55	6	10	100
32. The distance from school to qualify for assistance is appropriate in the area where I live	82	7	4	7	100

1 The total percentage (100%) refers to the number of questionnaires received (1213),

TABLE 13B

VIEWS ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE AIC SCHEME - WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Item	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Uncertain	No Response	Total[1]
	%	%	%	%	%
26. There is plenty of information available to parents about the AIC Scheme	63	23	7	7	100
27. The application forms are easy to read and fill in	68	23	3	6	100
28. The payment of allowances is usually prompt and regular	90	4	1	5	100
29. The boarding allowances should be increased annually to allow for inflation	91	1	2	6	100
30. The means test on additional allowances is fair	52	28	12	8	100
31. The cost of travel between home and school is a fair cost to be borne by parents	34	48	9	9	100
32. The distance from school to qualify for assistance is appropriate in the area where I live	80	6	5	9	100

Comments

1. The cost of travel between home and school is the main area of dissatisfaction in both States with only between 29 and 34 per cent agreeing that it is a fair cost to parents.
2. There was also a similar level of discontent expressed about the means test on additional allowances, lack of information on AIC and complexity of forms.
3. Furthermore, the annual adjustment of boarding allowances was strongly favoured by almost all respondents.

1 The total percentage (100%) refers to the number of questionnaires received (862).

TABLE 14A

COMMENTS ON THE ADEQUACY OF ALLOWANCES - QUEENSLAND

Comments	No.
1. Generally Inadequate	
No, it needs to be increased.	368
Travel costs very high	119
Increase governess allowance.	57
Means test level should be raised	40
Allowances should cover all costs	36
Allowance needed for books/uniforms and initial boarding costs	14
Allowance should increase on a sliding scale if more than one child living away from home	12
Second home allowance grossly inadequate	9
More help needed for handicapped children	6
Correspondence allowance inadequate	6
Total	667
2. Generally Adequate	
Allowance is adequate	186
Yes, adequate, with provisos	70
Correspondence and pre-school correspondence adequate	46
Total	302
3. Related Comments	
Allowance should keep pace with inflation	141
Penalised/disadvantaged living in the country	38
Should be tax deductions for education expenses	26
Need greater compensation for mothers teaching correspondence	
Landowners better off than wage earners	25
Hardship caused by fluctuating seasonal incomes; needs to be more flexible	10
More hostels needed in the country	9

../2

TABLE 14A (Cont'd)

Comments	No,
3. Related Comments (Cont'd)	
Allowances should be paid direct to schools	7
Discrimination against middle income earners	7
Lack of publicity and information on the scheme	6
Total	269

TABLE 14B

COMMENTS ON THE ADEQUACY OF ALLOWANCES - WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Comments	No.
1. Generally Inadequate	
Inadequate	220
Travel costs too high	58
Insufficient with several children	20
Means test should be increased	16
Means test discriminatory	15
Governess allowance unfair/inadequate	10
Total costs of boarding and travel should be paid by government	10
Unfair for the wage earner	7
Unfair that State allowance goes if one gets additional assistance	5
Total	361
2. Generally Adequate	
Adequate	156
Adequate only if child in a hostel or boarding privately	7
Adequate, but should be more money for country high schools	3
Total	166
3. Related Comments	
Should be reviewed annually for the inflation rate	124
Variable income of farmers should be considered	8
More help needed for correspondence mothers	7
Should be similar scheme for tertiary students	5
Simplify forms	5
Total	149

../2

TABLE 14B (Cont'd)

Comments

1. The pattern of comments received on the adequacy of allowances was similar in both States. In Queensland as for Western Australia, there were twice as many comments expressing the inadequacy of allowances compared with the number of satisfied recipients. In both States travel costs rated highly as an area of major concern and was seen as one in which the AIC Scheme no longer provided adequate compensation.

2. A recommendation that the allowances be annually adjusted for the inflation rate, was expressed strongly in both States.

TABLE 15A

OTHER SIGNIFICANT COSTS - QUEENSLAND

Comments	Nos.
Travelling costs/wear and tear on vehicles; earnings lost through travel	183
Books	160
Uniforms	104
Music; sports; extra subjects	60
Stationery; subject materials	57
Miscellaneous, e.g. luggage, house accounts	50
Excursions	45
Pocket money	39
Levies/fees	29
Accommodation when visiting children	21
Laundry/dry cleaning	21
Second home	20
Medical/dental	19
Governess and school room equipment	17
Linen/bedding	14
Extra coaching; remedial teaching	14
Postage/telephone	8
Home help/labour to replace teaching mother	7
Total	868

TABLE 15B

OTHER SIGNIFICANT COSTS - WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Comments	Nos.
Travelling costs/wear and tear on car	111
Uniforms	100
Books	71
Trips, excursions, tours, camps	56
Extra clothing	55
Extra equipment, stationery, calculators	30
Sports fees/outings	21
Pocket money	21
Amenities fees and extra subject fees	18
Extra linen, bedding	15
Accommodation	10
Music lessons and equipment	8
Phone calls	7
Loss of working days	5
Governess	5
Extra tutoring	5
Insurance	4
Postage	4
Costs in setting up school room	3
Total	549

Comments

The high cost of travel was again reaffirmed by respondents in both States. Books, uniforms and extra-curricula activities also rated highly in terms of additional costs.

TABLE 16A

SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL FUNDS USED FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES - QUEENSLAND

Source	Nos.
Borrow from parents, relatives, employers	6
Budget carefully, only have bare essentials	6
Dip into savings	5
Wife found employment	3
Rarely take a holiday	3
Sell assets, jewellery, stamps, cattle	2
Total	25

Other Isolated Comments

Take out insurance policies
Moved to the city
Husband took an additional job

TABLE 16B

SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL FUNDS USED FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES - WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Source	Nos.
Budget carefully, defer business expansion, buy few clothes, luxuries, don't go on holidays	24
Work overtime; get a second job, e.g. prospecting; sell stocks/shares	9
Heavily in debt/bank overdraft/loans	9
Help from relatives/employer	5
Wife works	4
Establish second home	3
Took out insurance policies	2
Get a better paid job	1
Total	57

Comments

1. In view of the larger sample size in Queensland, it is apparent that respondents from that State were either less likely to seek additional sources of funds or were more reluctant to disclose that information. It will be remembered that the different age distribution of children in the two States meant that more Western Australian recipients were experiencing the costs of secondary education than their Queensland counterparts.

2. Of those who responded to this question, the implementation of careful budgeting and the borrowing of money from banks, relatives etc, were the most frequent courses of action taken to finance their children's education.

TABLE 17A

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS RE AIC SCHEME - QUEENSLAND

Comments	Nos.
Need more assistance with travelling costs, including petrol, wear and tear on car, subsidised bus fares, air fares etc.	142
Need more assistance to employ a governess	49
Allowances should be increased	49
AIC requires more publicity, better dissemination of various allowances	46
Quite happy with the scheme	40
Simplify the application forms	34
Abolish the means test	30
Correspondence mothers need more assistance with teaching aids and books	14
Mother teaching her children should receive governess allowance reimbursement	14
Equalise benefits between blacks and whites	12
Basic boarding allowance should be increased	12
Allowances should be sent directly to schools/hostels	12
Mileage criteria unfair	12
Should be tax deductions for education expenses	11
Need more hostels	10
Means test should be on taxable income	10
All costs should be met by the government	9
Allowance should come earlier in the term	9
Conveyance allowance should be on number of miles travelled, not on how many children in the car	9
Allowances should be indexed	3
Level at which means test set is too low	3
More itinerant teachers required	1
Total	531

Other Isolated Comments

Should be similar scheme for tertiary students
Cheques should have date and type of allowance on them
More consideration to gifted, handicapped, remedial students
More help for second homers
Property owners advantaged over wage and salary earners

TABLE 17B

AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS RE AIC SCHEME - WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Comments	Nos.
It doesn't cover costs - most inadequate; it should pay the total costs; living away from home costs excessive; we in the bush are disadvantaged in education facilities. Extra allowances needed for books and clothes, etc.	36
The allowances should keep up with inflation, should allow for increases in boarding costs	29
Travel costs are a great burden - a lot more assistance is needed	22
Scheme should be better advertised; information booklets should be clearer; more information needed on the breakdown of assistance received	22
Need more help for parents who do not want to send children away, e.g. for unemployed teachers to be used as governesses, allowances to cover hidden costs, reimbursement given automatically to all teaching mothers; correspondence allowances too low	18
Means test should be on a sliding scale depending on the number of children in the family	16
Distance criteria is unrealistic; distances are too great for young children to travel and expensive in time and money	15
Means test should be abolished; inappropriate, particularly in case of fluctuating rural income; should be assessed on gross income if at all	15
Tax deductions are needed for education expenses; AIC Scheme should'nt be taxed	14
State vouchers and AIC cheques should be received promptly, i.e. in time to pay all termly accounts	14
Unsatisfactory country junior high school due to lack of subjects, teaching standards, and competition - also at matriculation level on correspondence	14
Application forms too difficult to fill in; should be simpler and have some one official in the local area to answer questions; forms could be made automatic each year rather than fill it in each year	14
The administration needs to be more flexible and take into account individual cases of hardship, e.g. in drought areas	11
We are very happy with the scheme	10
Discrimination against wage and salary earners; married couples (as opposed to de facto couples) in relation to Aboriginal allowances	8

../2

TABLE 17B (Cont'd)

Comments	Nos.
State and Commonwealth schemes should be amalgamated; do not like State vouchers; not fair to miss out on State allowances if you get more than basic boarding allowance	7
Tertiary allowances unfair	7
Total	272

Isolated Comments

- Problems with mail services in correspondence education; also need more contact with itinerant teachers.
- Correspondence courses excellent.
- More help needed for country schools, hostels, agricultural colleges and private schools.
- Allowances should start before Year 8.

Comments

1. Those who responded to this section of the questionnaire generally expressed their dissatisfaction with the allowances. Concern was expressed about travel costs (especially in Queensland), the failure of allowances to keep pace with the inflation rate, and the inadequate assistance provided to maintain a governess. Improvements in each of these areas were sought.

2. Many respondents also recommended increased publicity for the AIC Scheme and simplification of information books and application forms. Changes to or the abolition of the means test also rated quite highly amongst the recommendations.

APPENDIX C

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON THE EDUCATION OF ISOLATED CHILDREN

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APPENDIX D

SUGGESTED REVISIONS OF AIC APPLICATION FORMS

Commonwealth Department of Education ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN 1981 Application for Assistance	AIC Form 1A

Important Notes

1. Complete this form with details about you and your spouse. Complete one Form 1B for each student on whose behalf you are applying, and attach the completed forms to this form.

2. Applications will not be accepted after 31 December 1982.

3. DO NOT LEAVE BLANKS. Where a choice of answers is given, please tick the appropriate box ☑ write NIL or N/A where appropriate.

4. Please read the INFORMATION BOOKLET carefully before completing this form.

5. Either parent may apply and, in certain circumstances, persons other than parents may apply (See Section of the Information Booklet).

6. Send the application to The Director, Commonwealth Department of Education in the State or Territory where you live.

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DETAILS OF PERMANENT HOME

a. Permanent home address (P.O. Box number is not acceptable)	Number and street		
	Suburb or town	State	Postcode
b. If the permanent home has no street number, please complete this section (*cross out whichever does not apply)	Portion/Section/Lot Number/ Location Number *	Hundred/Parish/Land District *	
	Shire/Municipality *	County	

c. Which parent(s) (i.e. applicant and spouse) will be living at this home in 1982?

(i) for the whole school year : Both ☐ One ☐ Neither ☐

(ii) for part of the school year Both ☐ One ☐ Neither ☐

SECOND HOME ARRANGEMENTS (if applicable)

a. Address of second home (P.O. Box number is not acceptable)	Number and street			
	Suburb or town	State	Postcode	Telephone
b. Which members of the family will be living at the second home from the beginning of the 1982 school year?				

c. Is the second home maintained principally to enable your children to attend school daily?

Yes ☐ No ☐

d. Could your permanent home provide adequate accommodation for all members of your family if they all lived there at the one time?

Yes ☐ No ☐

e. Will the permanent home be rented to another person during the 1982 school year?

Yes ☐ No ☐

f. Is the present living at the permanent home divorced or separated from the parent living at the second home?

Yes ☐ No ☐

g. Will at least one of the parents be living and/or working full time at the permanent home during the working weeks of the 1981 school year?

Yes ☐ No ☐

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DETAILS OF DEPENDANT CHILDREN

For how many students is assistance being claimed? ☐

Give details of children other than the student(s) for whom assistance is being claimed, who were, at 30th June 1982 :

(a) dependent on you and/or your spouse; and either

(b) under 16 years of age; or

(c) between the ages of 16 and 25 years and in full-time education

Surname or family name	Christian or given names	Date of birth	Name of school, university or other institution attended in 1981

METHOD OF PAYMENT

a. Do you wish payment to be made to another person?(e.g. a school principal) This must NOT be the student

No ☐ Yes ☐ →

Name or position of person

Name of school, hostel, etc.

Number and street

Suburb or town	State	Postcode

b. Do you wish payment to be made to a cheque account? (Payment cannot be made into a savings account)

No ☐ Yes ☐ →

Bank

Branch

Branch Address: Number and street

Suburb or town	State	Postcode

Cheque account number

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Form		of	

Commonwealth Department of Education

ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN

1982

Application for Assistance

AIC Form 1B

IMPORTANT NOTES

1. Complete this form with the details about one of the students on whose behalf application is being made. Attach all copies of this form to the completed form 1A.
2. DO NOT LEAVE BLANKS. Where a choice of answers is given, please tick the appropriate box ☑ Write NIL or N/A where appropriate.
3. Please read the information booklet carefully before completing this form.

DETAILS OF STUDENT for whom benefits are being claimed

a.	Surname or family name	
b.	Christian or given names	
c.	Date of birth	/ /19
	Sex of student	Male ☐ Female ☐
e.	Type(s) of allowance sought	Basic Boarding ☐ Additional Boarding ☐ Home Supervision ☐ Second Home ☐
f.	Is the student a ward of the State or a child in care of the State?	Yes ☐ No ☐
g.	Is the student an Australian citizen or a permanent resident of Australia?	Yes ☐ No ☐

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DETAILS OF APPLICANT AND SPOUSE

a. Name of applicant (NOT the student)	Mr ☐ Miss ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Other ____ Surname/Family Name Christian/Given Names	
b. Name of applicant's spouse (including de facto) Tick if sole parent ☐	Mr ☐ Miss ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Other ____ Surname/Family Name Christian/Given Names	
c. Full POSTAL ADDRESS of applicant (for cheques and correspondence)	Number and street OR _____ Post Office Box Number _____ Suburb or town State Postcode	
Please supply the following details about yourself and your spouse	APPLICANT	APPLICANT'S SPOUSE
d. Telephone Number	Home: Work:	Home: Work:
e. Are you an Australian citizen or a permanent resident of Australia?	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐
f. Are you the natural or adoptive parent of the students for whom benefits are being claimed?	Yes ☐ No ☐ If 'No', please explain why you are applying instead of the parent	Yes ☐ No ☐
g. Are you supporting financially the students for whom benefits are being claimed for 1982?	Yes ☐ No ☐ If 'No', please explain the circumstances	Yes ☐ No ☐ If 'No' please explain the circumstances
h. Does each student for whom benefits are being claimed normally live with you during school holidays at the family's permanent home?	Yes ☐ No ☐ If 'No', please explain the circumstances	
(i) What was your taxable income in the last financial year 1980-1981*? NOTE: Taxable Income is actual income upon which tax was paid in that financial year.	$	$

* This information need be given only by applicants applying for The Additional Boarding Allowance.

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h.	Have you applied for assistance from any of the following sources?:	
	(i) Aboriginal Secondary Grant	Yes ☐ No ☐
	(ii) Adult Secondary Education Assistance	Yes ☐ No ☐
	(iii) Tertiary Education Assistance	Yes ☐ No ☐
	(iv) Secondary Allowance	Yes ☐ No ☐
	(v) Soldier's Children Education Scheme	Yes ☐ No ☐
	(vi) Defense Force Education Allowance	Yes ☐ No ☐
	(vii) Commonwealth Education Costs Allowance	Yes ☐ No ☐
i.	Is the student studying full-time in 1982?	Yes ☐ No ☐
j.	Did/will the student start school in the first school week of 1982?	Yes ☐ No ☐ → Give starting date / 1982 and explain circumstances
k.	Year/grade enrolled in for 1982	
l.	Name and address of school attended/to be attended in 1982. (If studying by correspondence give name of school supervising lessons)	
m.	Name and address of school/institution attended in 1981 (If same as'l' write 'same').	
n.	Does/will the student board away from home to attend school in 1982?	
o.	Boarding address (If boarding school, write 'school'. If hostel or private board give full address and name of person in charge.)	
p.	Date boarding began/will begin in 1982. (If first week of school, write 'FIRST WEEK')	

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DETAILS OF SCHOOLING

a. Is the student geographically isolated?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Note: Special consideration may be given to students who do not meet these criteria, but who can still be regarded as genuinely isolated. Refer to Section of the information booklet for more information about this. If you ask special consideration, please attach a statement outlining your case.

Name of government school with classes in the appropriate grade/year nearest to your home:

_____

Suburb/town: _____

Distance of your home from the nearest transport service to a government school with classes in the appropriate grade/year

More than 4.5 km (2.8 miles) ☐

Less than 4.5 km (2.8 miles) ☐

Distance from your home to the school served by the above transport service:

More than 56 km (35 miles ☐

Less than 56 km (35 miles) ☐

Total travelling time to and from school by this service

_____hrs _____min

Is your home more than 16 km (10 miles) from the school served by this transport service

Yes ☐ No ☐

b. Is the student unable to live at home and attend school daily because of

(i) a physical or intellectual handicap ☐

(ii) a psychological or behavioural problem ☐

(iii) a medical condition ☐

(iv) not applicable

which of the following conditions apply?

(i) the student must attend a special institution which caters for his/her disability ☐

(ii) the student studies by correspondence because he/she cannot cope with manual dail attendance at school ☐

(iii) the student is unable to travel long distances daily because of his disability ☐

(iv) the student must receive frequent, extensive and essential medical treatment which is not available close to his/her home ☐

(v) the student must attend school far away from his home because of the effect of climatic conditions on his/her disability ☐

Does the student receive an invalid or blind pension?

Yes ☐ No ☐

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c. Is the student undertaking (i) a Certificate course ☐ (ii) an Agricultural course ☐ (iii) a Special Talent course ☐ (iv) not applicable ☐	Qualification to be gained (if any): _____
d. Does the student require specialist remedial tuition? Yes ☐ No ☐	Type of tuition: _____ _____ Amount of tuition received _____ hours per week
e. Does the student's family move frequently for employment purposes?	Yes ☐ No ☐ Please provide a statement of the family's actual movements in 1982 and planned movements in 1982, and supporting evidence such as a signed statement from employers.

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Commonwealth Department of Education

ASSISTANCE FOR ISOLATED CHILDREN

1982

Application for Continuation of Assistance

AIC Form 1C

IMPORTANT NOTES

1. This form is only for applicants who have received benefits in 1981 and are eligible to continue to do so in 1982 without a major change in their circumstances.

2. If you have changed

   (a) your permanent home address

   or (b) your second home arrangements since 1981, you should complete form 1A and not this form.

3. If you are claiming benefits for students who did not receive benefits in 1981 or for students whose circumstances have changed since 1981 you must attach a completed copy of form 1B for each such student.

4. Applications will not be accepted after 31 December 1982.

5. DO NOT LEAVE BLANKS. Where a choice of answers is given please tick the appropriate box ☑ Write NIL or N/A where appropriate.

6. Please read the information booklet carefully before completing this form.

7. Send the application to The Director, Commonwealth Department of Education in the State or Territory where you live. Addresses are listed below.

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DETAILS OF APPLICANT AND SPOUSE

a. Name of applicant (NOT the student)	Mr ☐ Miss ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Other _____	Surname/Family Name	Christian/Given Names
b. Name of applicant's spouse (including de facto) Tick if sole parent ☐	Mr ☐ Miss ☐ Mrs ☐ Ms ☐ Other _____	Surname/Family Name	Christian/Given Names
c. Full POSTAL ADDRESS of applicant (for cheques and correspondence)	Number and Street OR _____ Post Office Box Number		
	Suburb or town	State	Postcode

Please supply the following details about yourself and your spouse	APPLICANT	APPLICANT'S SPOUSE
d. Telephone Number	Home: Week:	Home: Week:
e. Are you an Australian citizen or a permanent resident of Australia?	Yes ☐ No ☐	Yes ☐ No ☐
f. Are you the natural or adoptive parent of the students for whom benefits are being claimed?	Yes ☐ No ☐ If 'No', please explain why you are applying instead of the parent.	Yes ☐ No ☐
g. Are you supporting financially the students for whom benefits are being claimed in 1982?	Yes ☐ No ☐ If 'No', please explain the circumstances	Yes ☐ No ☐ If 'No', please explain the circumstances
h. Does each student for whom benefits are being claimed normally live with you during school holidays at the family's permanent home?	Yes ☐ No ☐ If 'No', please explain the circumstances	
i. What was your taxable income in the last financial year 1980-81*	$	$

* This information need be given only by applicants applying for the Additional Boarding Allowance

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DETAILS OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN

For how many students is assistance being claimed? ☐

Please give details of all children who were, at 30th June 1981

(a) dependent on you and/or your spouse; and either
(b) under 16 years of age; or
(c) between the ages of 16 and 25 years and in full-time education.

Christian given names	Date of Birth	Name of school, university or other institution attended in 198	Year or grade	Type of assistance being claimed

METHOD OF PAYMENT

a. Do you wish payment to be made to another person? (e.g. a school principal) This must NOT be the student

No ☐ Yes ☐

Name or position of person

Name of school, hostel, etc.

Number and street

Suburb or town	State	Postcode

b. Do you wish payment to be made to a cheque account? (Payment cannot be made into a savings account)

No ☐ Yes ☐ →

Bank

Branch

Branch Address: Number and street

Suburb or town	State	Postcode

Cheque account number

AGREEMENT

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APPENDIX E

CALCULATIONS OF RECOMMENDED AIC ALLOWANCES

A. Boarding Allowance (1981 prices)

Difference between average cost of board at a boarding school or hostel and estimated cost of maintaining a child at home

$2,290 - $1,160 = $1,130

B. Additional Allowance (1981 prices)

The difference between average costs of board and the Boarding Allowance

$2,290 - $1,130 = $1,160

C. Adjusted Family Income

The MAFI recommended is the equivalent of that for the TEAS Allowance. For 1982 it has been set at $11,034.

D. To Calculate Adjusted Family Income

Taxable Income (that is, gross income less deductions of costs incurred in earning income, as allowed by the Commissioner of Taxation) less $450 for each dependent child. Thus if the Taxable Income is $X, then the AFI is $(X - (450n)) where 'n' is the number of dependent children.

E. Abatement Rate with Sibling Concessional Allowance

(i) One eligible child, abatement rate $2.50 for each $10 that AFI exceeds $11,034, AFI Range = $11,034 - $15,614

(ii) Two eligible children, abatement rate $1.25 for each $10 that AFI exceeds $11,034, AFI Range = $11,034 - $20,194

(iii) Three eligible children, abatement rate 83 cents for each $10 that AFI exceeds $11,034, AFI Range = $11,034 - $24,774

Notes on Estimates

A. The average cost of board is calculated from fees charged at a representative sample of boarding schools and hostels in all States and the Act for Term 1 1981 ($2,090). To this was added a nominal average of $200 for incidental costs of extra-curricular subject charges, excursions and outings, pocket money, and so on. (The ABSEG Scheme allows $360 for books and clothing.)

The Household Expenditure Survey 1975-76 (ABS catalogue No. 6156.0) provides comprehensive data on average weekly expenditures for households of various compositions of adults and children. The average household expenditure per child, less expenditure on education from that survey, adjusted against the Consumer Price Index, provides the following estimates:

	CPI Index No.	Indexed Expenditure Per Child $
1975-76	193.3	18.90
1976-77	220.0	21.43
1977-78	241.0	23.56
1978-79	260.7	25.49
1979-80	287.0	28.06
1980-81 (est)	296.0	28.94

Note: 1980-81 estimate is based on quarterly CPI for September 1980, December 1980, and March 1981.

B. Since the assistance provided under the AIC Scheme is related to costs incurred for maintaining a child at school away from home, the ceiling of allowances should be those costs. Considerations of equity (the relative differences in access to education among different student populations) support subsidising the total costs incurred for those least able to pay.

C. The income level suggested here is that proposed for the TEAS and is equivalent to the projected sum for the existing Additional Boarding Allowance.

D. The sibling concessional abatement rate should be allowed in calculating eligibility for the additional allowance. This would mean, for example, that a family with less than the marginal adjusted family income ($11,034) would qualify for the full value of the allowance. Thereafter the entitlement would diminish in proportion to the amount that the adjusted family income exceeded the MAFI. Those families whose adjusted family income exceeded the maximum would not receive an additional allowance.

(This is the formula in current use in all Commonwealth student allowance schemes. Comparability of approaches in Commonwealth policies should be maintained. Therefore Taxable Family Income rather than the Gross Family Income should be adopted as the basis for calculating MAFI since this provides an amount closer to the disposable family income from which costs of education are met. The use of Taxable Income as the base amount has the added advantage of eliminating existing anomalies between the income considered for education allowances and income considered in existing Tax regulations.)

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